THE Nation.

BEYOND PEAK OIL
MICHAEL T. KLARE

CHILDCARE WOES
SHARON LERNER

ZAKES MDA'S GHOSTS
LAILA LALAMI

THE NEW RIGHT-WING SMEAR MACHINE

HOW E-MAIL IS CHANGING OUR POLITICS
CHRISTOPHER HAYES

NOVEMBER 12, 2007
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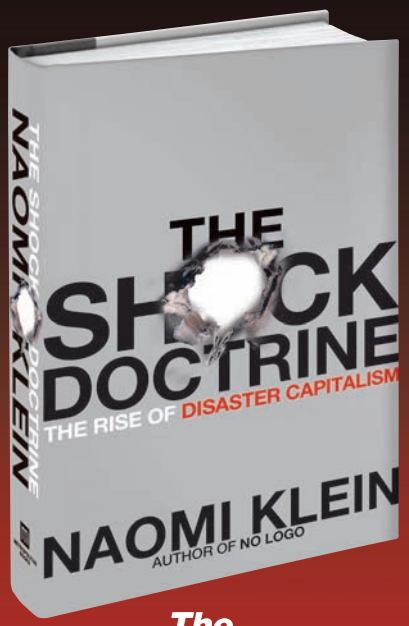

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Exchange

Taking Care of Soldiers

"Specialist Town Takes His Case to Washington," by Joshua Kors [Oct. 15], contained numerous inaccuracies, despite our providing written response.

(a) The Army medical family has a strong commitment to taking care of soldiers. If a soldier believes he or she was discharged incorrectly, the formal mechanism is an appeal to the Army Board for the Correction of Military Records. However, due to my concern over these issues, they may provide their information directly to me, and I will ensure review of their records.

(b) A personality disorder diagnosis does not necessarily mean that a medical evaluation board is needed. It indicates that a soldier has personality traits that are not compatible with military service. A personality disorder diagnosis does not negate a medical evaluation board if that is warranted by other illnesses or injury.

(c) It is unacceptable for any provider to be pressured to falsely diagnose a patient. I ask any individual who may have information about such allegations to come forward to my office or to the Inspector General so that the allegations can be fully investigated.

(d) The behavioral health officers at the Army hospital at Fort Carson reviewed the Chapter 5-13 cases in soldiers who were diagnosed with PTSD. The data demonstrated that there were no soldiers separated under Chapter 5-13 in the last four years who should have undergone a medical evaluation board.

(e) Some specific cases were brought to my attention, and they were reviewed by the chief of the psychiatry department at the Fort Carson hospital. A second level of review was done by behavioral health staff in my office. In all of these cases, the documents reflected appropriate medical care.

(f) Mental health records contain a great deal of information about the soldiers' prior history, family of origin, substance use, previous patterns of behavior, as well as their current behavioral issues. A review of the chart normally reveals a wealth of diagnostic information, to include psychological testing. Routinely, there is evidence in the record to substantiate the diagnosis. The soldiers are also screened for posttraumatic stress disorder, head trauma and other medical diagnoses, and those symptoms, or lack thereof, are recorded in the charts.

The bottom line is that we care about soldiers and are committed to providing them the best care possible. Again, due to my concerns, soldiers may provide their information to me, and I will have their records reviewed.

Maj. Gen. Gale S. Pollock
Acting Surgeon General, US Army

Mt. Vernon, N.Y.

The diagnosis of personality disorder attributed to veterans of combat operations is not applicable to returning soldiers. In order to have pre-existing conditions, veterans would have to have had a diagnosis of conduct disorder prior to their eighteenth birthday.

As a veteran myself, I remember that the ability to kill an enemy combatant without feeling guilt or remorse was prized. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* describes a personality disorder as "an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the individual's culture, is pervasive and inflexible, has an onset in adolescence or early adulthood, is stable over time, and leads to distress or impairment." I remember a drill sergeant drumming into our heads during basic training that we were going to be broken down and rebuilt into "mean green killing machines." The louder we screamed as we jammed our bayonets into mock-up enemy soldiers the more verbal reinforcement we received.

When are we going to come to terms with the fact that violence and aggression are at the core of our existence, and when it is displayed appropriately in battle we are respected and envied for it. Soldiers are *trained* to have "personality disorders" and should not be punished for it.

Robert M. Lichtman, PhD

letters@thenation.com

(continued on page 30)

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since 1865

Stop the Media Grab

If FCC chairman Kevin Martin gets his way, News Corp CEO Rupert Murdoch will be able to go into the largest American city and buy the daily newspapers, the "alternative" weeklies, the neighborhood and suburban weeklies, the eight biggest radio stations, the most watched TV stations and the most popular websites. Then he can start making *real* money by producing the news and commentary for those different forums from one downsized, dumbed-down but dominant "local" newsroom.

EDITORIAL

That's a local problem, with profound ramifications for already undercovered urban and low-income areas. But there's a national threat as well. Representatives, senators, even Presidents are elected on a region-by-region, state-by-state basis, so when the dominant media in a battleground state speak with one voice, the owner will shape not just the local agenda but the national debate.

The dream of attaining such power and profit is what makes Murdoch, Tribune Company–buyer Sam Zell and other media moguls refuse to take no for an answer from Americans who recognize the nightmarish prospect of this threat to diversity, discourse and democracy. Don't forget that when Martin's predecessor, Michael Powell, moved in 2003 to eliminate cross-ownership limits, nearly 3 million Americans of all political stripes—from the NRA to Code Pink—united in a media democracy movement to protest. The courts blocked the change, citing the "arbitrary and capricious" nature of the FCC's changes. But the companies kept cajoling the Bush White House and its FCC appointees. Now Martin says the commission will attempt to redraw the ownership rules before Christmas.

There's no debating Martin's intentions. Consumer Federation of America research director Mark Cooper says, "The chairman has already decided what rule changes he wants to make—he is just going through the motions." Public comment is the last thing Martin wants, as town hall meetings in recent months have revealed overwhelming opposition to lifting limits on cross-ownership. Dissident FCC commissioners Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein will highlight citizen opposition as they seek to prevent Martin's rush to rewrite the rules. But the two Democrats are outnumbered by three Bush appointees. The only way to maintain media diversity is for Congress and the public to join the debate. Martin's scheming should be challenged at every turn by *Nation* readers and citizens in grassroots campaigns like that of the StopBigMedia.com Coalition.

Presidential candidates must be pressed to use their bully pulpits to denounce this power grab by Big Media and to stake out a prodemocracy approach to media issues and the kinds of appointments they would make to the next FCC. Congress must schedule oversight hearings to highlight the commission's failure to study the damage already done by media consolidation and the threat posed by more.

Hearings should be part of a broader crackdown on federal giveaways to the telecom industry—including the current attempt by the Administration to secure immunity from civil lawsuits for telephone and Internet providers that tap Americans' phones and computers without court approval. Even if scrutiny does not cause Martin to back down, sustained public outcry will strengthen the case for judicial intervention.

This is not just a fight about media ownership. It is a fight about whether the bedrock of self-governance—a free, diverse, responsive and responsible press—will survive. If Kevin Martin has his way, Americans will be stuck with one-size-fits-all media and a downsized democracy.

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VOLUME 285, NUMBER 15, NOVEMBER 12, 2007
PRINTED OCTOBER 24

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
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SUBMISSIONS: Queries only, no manuscripts. Go to www.thenation.com and click on "about," then "submissions" for a query form. Queries may be mailed to The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. SASE for poems.

INTERNET: Selections from the current issue become available Thursday night at www.thenation.com.

Printed on 100% recycled 40% post-consumer acid- and chlorine-free paper, in the USA.

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A Values Voters Schism

Just after the results of their straw poll were announced at the Family Research Council's Values Voters Summit in Washington, DC, in October, Janet Folger was seething. Folger, a protégée of the late televangelist D. James Kennedy, had been snubbed in September when none of the leading Republican candidates showed up for her Values Voters debate in Florida. So when Folger's man—in fact, the man Folger has declared to be chosen by God—was just thirty votes shy of first place behind Mitt Romney, Folger was furious. "Huckabee's gonna win," Folger sputtered. "They [the Romney campaign] flew people in—Mormon groups in from Arizona. He's got more money. Huckabee is almost right on the money. He really is the true winner."

COMMENT

The Christian right, a movement built on the politics of resentment, now finds itself embroiled in its own internal culture war. On one side are the true believers, the standard-bearers who—in the primaries, at least—won't compromise principle for expediency and are bewildered by their leaders' declining to get behind former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, the only Republican in the field who is "one of us." On the other side are the pragmatists, who are looking for a candidate who can also satisfy the antitax and neoconservative wings of the party.

If the Values Voters Summit did not produce a consensus candidate, it did clarify the options for the Christian right. Before the conference, Fred Thompson was seen as a serious contender, but his lazy speech, devoid of evangelical code about personal faith and the culture war, barely kept the audience awake. Rudy Giuliani charged hard to his right, but his lame reminiscences about his Catholic boyhood fell flat. "I would have to pray on that," one woman told me when I asked if she could vote for him in the general election. And although Focus on the Family's James Dobson had earlier made noises about a third-party candidacy, most attendees, and even Family Research Council president Tony Perkins, made it clear that a third-party run is off the table. They know political suicide when they see it.

That the movement's choices have come down to Huckabee and Romney places long-simmering class tensions within the Christian right into stark relief. Huckabee is a former Baptist preacher with a portfolio of heartwarming tales of his impoverished childhood in the rural Bible Belt. He has lashed out against the "establishment Republican" who is a "wholly owned subsidiary of Wall Street." In contrast, Romney is a multimillionaire former CEO whose portfolio is from the upper echelon of venture capitalism. To Huckabee supporters, Romney has bought his authenticity from consultants, while Huckabee is surging on a shoestring budget. Any Huckabee success embodies the up-by-the-bootstraps narrative his supporters crave. If Romney prevails, it will confirm all their resentments about the privilege and wealth that control the Republican Party.

It's not just that Huckabee the preacher more naturally speaks their religious language. It's that he's more like them than the country club GOP types the Christian right believes have paid mere lip service to its issues. Although there's little discernible difference in their positions on the basic issues of abortion and gay rights, Huckabee made clear Romney's Johnny-come-lately

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status when he said, "It's important that people sing from their hearts and don't merely lip-sync the lyrics to our songs."

Eric Lupardus, a student at Southern Illinois University and a Huckabee supporter, told me that Huckabee "branches away from the stereotypical Republican—rich white guy who dumps toxic waste into the river. He's not that guy, he's a normal guy." Huckabee is better than most Republicans, said Filipe Dacosta, who had traveled from Georgia because "people can relate to him—people like me, who grew up poor and made it in life. He knows how people feel, unlike most Republicans, who grew up with a silver spoon in their mouths. They can't relate to the middle class or poor. Huckabee can."

Dacosta said he was angry that the Christian-right leadership, particularly FRC's Perkins, Southern Baptist Convention's Richard Land and American Values's Gary Bauer, had not only withheld an endorsement of Huckabee but had sent signals before the summit favoring Romney. Dacosta added, "They're trying to force it down our throats. Makes you wonder, why are they doing it? This guy is a billionaire." Dobson also has yet to endorse a candidate. Huckabee's backers are dismayed that so far he's refused to give their man his blessing.

Huckabee's supporters at the conference are the core of the hard core, the unabashed conservatives enthralled with hyperbolic fearmongering about "the homosexual agenda," illegal immigrants and what Jack Abramoff pal Rabbi Daniel Lapin called the "sordid stain of secular socialism." Romney's supporters are more subdued and even embarrassed by some of the movement's more outlandish antics. Charles Mitchell, who blogs at evangelicalsformitt.com but is not formally affiliated with the Romney campaign, said, "We don't just want you to get up there and pound your foot and say, 'I'm prolife!' 'Let's go after gay marriage!'" He also said that evangelicals like him are frustrated by publicity stunts like Judge Roy Moore's defiance of a court order to remove a Ten Commandments monument from his courthouse. "Where did that get us?" Mitchell demanded. "It got him on TV, and it made us look like fools." Evangelical supporters of Romney, Mitchell suggested, are mortified by that sort of polarizing showmanship, which serves only to rally the shock troops in the Christian right's activist army.

So far Romney has racked up more endorsements from Christian-right leaders than Huckabee, and a slew of prominent figures have either explicitly or implicitly given their followers permission to vote for a Mormon. Most people I spoke with—including Huckabee supporters—seemed to accept such a vote as a last resort for the general election but not for the primary. There also seemed to be no doubt they would vote for Romney over any Democrat (especially Hillary Clinton).

But the cracks in the Christian right's armor signal discontent

Noted.

NO SPEEDY EXIT: **Dennis Hastert**, the wrestling coach who went to the House and got drafted into a Potemkin Speakership by **Tom DeLay**, would like nothing more than to quit Congress and make big bucks as a lobbyist. Unfortunately, **Barack Obama** stands in his way. Hastert, who knew he was in over his head as a backbench Congressman, never wanted to be Speaker. He was forced to take the top job by DeLay in the late '90s. DeLay wanted to run the House but knew he was too unappealing to be the face of the Republican majority. So he tapped a loyal lieutenant, Hastert, as his frontman.

Now DeLay is gone—potentially to jail. And Hastert is synonymous with failure, having mismanaged the concession so badly his party has little chance of retaking control of the House for as long as memories of the DeLay/Hastert days linger. In fact, a flurry of recent resignations by senior Republicans threaten to set the GOP even further back in 2008. So Hastert's not seeking a new term. And he would like to quit before this one ends—a move that would speed up the process of attracting lucrative lobbying contracts. But that's where his Obama problem comes in. If Hastert quits now, Illinois would likely hold a special election to fill his seat February 5. That's the day Obama will be competing in Illinois's presidential primary. A big Democratic turnout for Obama in Hastert's district could flip the seat out of GOP hands. So a frustrated Hastert must go through the motions of serving the people for a few more months. JOHN NICHOLS

AS CALI BURNS: With wildfires engulfing Southern California, Senator **Barbara Boxer** notes, "Right now, we are down 50 percent in terms of our National Guard equipment, because they're all in Iraq." Lt. Gov. **John Garamendi** echoes her plea: "What we really need are those firefighters, we need the equipment. We need, frankly, we need our troops back from Iraq."

AN OPEN LETTER: Dear **John Podhoretz**, Congratulations on being named editor in chief of *Commentary*, the distinguished magazine that for many years was subsidized by the American Jewish Committee, which had the good sense to allow it complete editorial independence. You don't need us to tell you that over the past three or four decades *The Nation* and *Commentary*, which has become one of the leading voices of neoconservatism, have had their differences.

We write today not to rehearse our differences but to remind you of *Commentary* past. When your father took over the magazine in 1960 and published writers like **Paul Goodman** on "The Ineffectuality of Some Intelligent People," **Ted Solotaroff** on "The Graduate Student: A Profile," **Irving Howe** on *The New Yorker*'s refusal to run letters to the editor (too grubby), **James Baldwin** on race, **Edgar Friedenberg** on education, **Dwight Macdonald** and **Philip Roth** on whatever; when *Commentary* ran a symposium on issues of war and peace and went beyond its stereotypical stable to include participants like **C.P. Snow** and peace activist **H. Stuart Hughes** (along with standbys like **Sidney Hook**), it was one of the most stimulating magazines in the country.

You don't need *The Nation* to tell you where to go for inspiration, but you could do worse than reread the *Commentary* of the young **Norman Podhoretz**. THE EDITORS

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between the privileged and the grassroots. The notion that the "grasstops" would shun one of their own because his rival—a Mormon, no less—has more money is insulting to them. But because they've been persuaded that Democrats are anti-Christian and un-American, they'll be stuck once again with voting for GOP elites, unless Huckabee pulls off an upset.

Dacosta was ready to inflict the punishment he knows will speak to the leadership he believes has betrayed him. "As for Gary Bauer and Tony Perkins," he said, "they will not get another red cent from me." SARAH POSNER

Sarah Posner writes "The FundamentaList," a weekly roundup of news from the religious right, for The American Prospect Online. *Her book* God's Profits *will be published by PoliPoint in January.*

The New McCarthyism

Meet Professor Nadia Abu El-Haj, a notorious Barnard College professor now up for tenure who:

§ claims the ancient Israelite kingdoms are a "pure political fabrication,"

§ denies the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 CE and instead blames its destruction on the Jews,

§ does not speak or read Hebrew yet had the temerity to publish a book on Israeli archaeology that demanded such expertise,

COMMENT

§ is so ignorant of her topic that she quotes one archaeologist on how a dig might have damaged the ancient palaces of Solomon—oblivious to the fact that those palaces, if they existed, were far from the site in question.

None of these charges are true. You could look it up. I did, in El-Haj's book *Facts on the Ground*, about which these charges are made. The statements for which a network of right-wing critics assail her book are not there.

I asked Paula Stern, the Barnard alum who has organized an online petition demanding that El-Haj be denied tenure, how she squared her petition's charges with El-Haj's book. "The petition takes pieces of criticisms from experts. It may not be quoted 100 percent accurate," she admitted. Still, more than 2,500 people, including many Barnard and Columbia alumni, have signed on to its claims. Tellingly, Stern, who now lives in the West Bank, voiced astonishment at being asked to justify her charges in terms of what El-Haj's book actually says. "I've spoken to many newspapers," she said. "No one has done what you've done."

I looked that up, too. In the key media venues, at least, Stern was right; and not just with regard to her target. In case after case, a network of right-wing activists has started an online furor based on a mélange of distorted or provably false charges against someone involved in Middle East studies. They supported these charges with quotes yanked out of context or entirely made up and wielded a broad brush of guilt by association. Right-wing media megaphoned the charges, stoking the furor. And mainstream media ultimately noticed and responded, often focusing their stories on the furor rather than the facts.

Under pressure from these assaults, some academic institutions buckle and a professor's career is derailed; in other cases it is permanently stained. More insidious, even when tenure puts an academic beyond the reach of his or her assailants, more vulnerable junior faculty and grad students take note. "There certainly is a sense among faculty and grad students that they're being watched, monitored," said Zachary Lockman, president of the Middle East Studies Association. "People are always looking over their shoulder, feeling that whatever they say—in accurate or, more likely, distorted form—can end up on a website. It definitely has a chilling effect."

This is the modus operandi of the New McCarthyism. It targets a new enemy for our era: Muslims, Arabs and others in the Middle East field who are identified as stepping over an unstated line in criticizing Israel, as radical Islamists, as just plain radical or as in some way sympathetic to terrorists. Its purveyors include Campus Watch, run by Arab studies scholar Daniel Pipes; the David Project, supported by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Foundation; and David Horowitz's *FrontPage Magazine* (in October Horowitz organized an "Islamo-Fascism Awareness Week" on campuses across the nation).

Their efforts often appear to be linked. As first noted by blogger Richard Silverstein, the earliest web attack on El-Haj's book was posted simultaneously by Campus Watch and *FrontPage*, in October 2005. Alexander Joffe, identified as a professor at SUNY, Purchase, published a harshly negative review of the book in *The Journal of Near Eastern Studies* that same month. The prestigious journal did not note—and was not informed—that he was then director of Campus Watch. Soon after, he became research director for the David Project. Less prominent researchers like Stern, the online *PipeLine News* and writers such as Beila Rabinowitz and William Mayer provide raw material to the more well-known portals, such as Pipes and Horowitz. Pipes's and Horowitz's material is, in turn, picked up by key conservative papers like the *New York Post* and *New York Sun*.

There is an undeniable security threat, but as in the 1950s the New McCarthyites use it as a base for demagogy. Their distinguishing feature is not concern about this threat but cynical indifference to the truth or decency of their charges. Take the case of Debbie Almontaser, the New York City public high school principal forced to resign in August as head of a new Arabic/English secondary school. The furor revolved around her attempt in an interview with the *Post* to explain the meaning of, rather than simply condemn, T-shirts bearing the words Intifada NYC. This provoked a firestorm. United Federation of Teachers chief Randi Weingarten, a key supporter of Almontaser's school, condemned her in a letter to the

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Advise and Consent

The standards have been lowered now,
As Democrats judge Judge Mukasey:
Though he may have some Bushite views,
At least he isn't dumb or crazy.

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Post. The next day Almontaser resigned—a move publicly welcomed by Schools Chancellor Joel Klein and Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Almontaser has since stated she was told to resign or the school, which she founded, would be closed.

In its obscuring, anodyne postmortem on the affair, the *New York Times* vaguely described Almontaser as a victim of the city's "treacherous ethnic and ideological political currents" rather than of specific charges that were demonstrably false—like Pipes's widely publicized claim, based on a truncated quotation, that she denied Muslims or Arabs were involved in the 9/11 attacks. The *Times* report on El-Haj adopted a similar hands-off stance, simply quoting supporters and attackers. It did not once compare the activists' charges with what El-Haj actually said in her book.

As it happens, Almontaser's forced resignation was the city Education Department's second dive in the face of pressure from the New McCarthyites. Three years ago it dismissed Professor Rashid Khalidi, the esteemed director of Columbia's Middle East Institute, from lecturing teachers enrolled in professional development courses. The dismissal came in response to a *Sun* article claiming Khalidi had denounced Israel as "a 'racist' state with an 'apartheid system.'" Khalidi denied the quote fragments as they were used in the story. "I do not think Zionism is racist," he told the *Forward*. "When we talk about some of the contemporary laws, there are policies that I consider racist and discriminatory." Asked if the department had verified Khalidi's purported remarks before dismissing him, a department spokesman avoided answering *Times* columnist Joyce Purnick.

Khalidi still has his day job, as does—so far—a nontenured Columbia colleague, Joseph Massad, who according to a special school investigative committee was falsely accused several years ago of discriminating against Jewish and Israeli students. The same cannot be said for Norman Finkelstein, who was terminated at Chicago's DePaul University in September after the school's president—in a rare departure from standard procedure—rejected the overwhelming tenure approval Finkelstein had received at both the departmental and college levels. Finkelstein's scholarly work has accused Jewish groups of exploiting the Holocaust and Israel of egregious human rights violations. He had incurred the special wrath of Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz, whose book defending Israel Finkelstein had devoted an entire book to savaging. Dershowitz, in turn, tried unsuccessfully to prevent the University of California Press from publishing Finkelstein's book, and sent Finkelstein's tenure committees a dossier that he said documented his "most egregious academic sins, and especially his outright lies, misquotations, and distortions." Clearly, the tenure committees were not impressed by Dershowitz's claims. DePaul president Dennis Holtschneider, for his part, denied that Dershowitz's intervention affected his decision.

Beshara Doumani, a University of California history professor, has mapped the systemic strategy of the New McCarthyism, highlighting that more than just its targets are new. First and foremost, private advocacy groups, not Congressional committees, are by and large today's means of pressuring academic administrations—at least, so far. These groups often retain important ties to government figures. But they are most focused on organizing alumni and students, with an eye toward generating public outrage and eventually government and donor pressure.

"I'm worried about untenured professors trying to get tenure," said Doumani, co-chair of the Middle East Studies Association's Committee on Academic Freedom. "I'm worried about entire departments saying, 'We need people in Middle East positions, but we're not going to hire certain kinds of people. It involves too much headache, too much risk.' How do you quantify that? You can't. But it's going around. I can tell you, it's a real issue."

LARRY COHLER-ESSES

Larry Cohler-Esses is editor-at-large for the New York Jewish Week.

Comix Nation

by STEVE BRODNER

The TAO of FRED
PAGES from the THOMPSON playbook
DON'T Campaign in NEW HAMPSHIRE
"I find the LESS you DO the MORE they LIKE you. FIND your INNER stillness, MAKE your mind a BLANK. FEEL the world just drift AWAY."
TRY to MENTION the Soviet UNION in your SPEECHES
"It will REMIND the "BASE" of REAGAN and those pesky Soviets WHO ARE STILL A THREAT, I reckon."
GO ON, MAKE 'EM CLAP, dagnabbit!
"Sometimes your ELOQUENCE will LEAVE 'EM DEEP in thought. IF they FORGET TO CLAP DON'T BE SHY! WHOOP IT UP!"
You BETTER CLAP, BOY!
Zzzz
STICK to the RURAL SPOTS
"A LITTLE road DUST and they'll NEVER SEE those K Street WHITE SHOES."
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Eric Alterman

The Liberal Hawks' Lament

When lamenting the loss of endangered species, consider the plight of the embattled "liberal hawks." Back in their salad days, when George W. Bush's approval ratings were sky-high and "Mission Accomplished" was not yet a poignant punch line, they spread their talons wide, leveling accusations left and left. According to the editors of *The New Republic*, for instance, those liberals who refused to get aboard Bush's friendship train to Baghdad were motivated by "abject pacifism" characterized by "intellectual incoherence," with views all but indistinguishable from "pierced-tongued demonstrators." Today, amid the vast wreckage in Iraq that is the direct result of the policies they promoted, some members of this marvelously adaptable species have successfully reinvented themselves. They're older and wiser but still victims of the same pacifistic, incoherent, pierce-tongued liberals who sometimes go so far as to liken them to neoconservatives. Roger Cohen, writing recently on the *New York Times* op-ed page, complained, "As America bumped down to earth, 'liberal' lost the mantle of political insult most foul. Its place was taken by the pervasive, glib 'neocon.'" You thought the Iraqis had it bad, what with a destroyed, dysfunctional country and massive amounts of mindless murder and the like. But look at what Cohen & Co. have had to endure:

Christopher Hitchens, columnist for *Slate* and *Vanity Fair* and bestselling author; Thomas Friedman, columnist for the *New York Times* and bestselling author; Peter Beinart, contributor to *Time*, senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and celebrated author; Paul Berman, distinguished writer in residence at NYU and celebrated author; George Packer, correspondent for *The New Yorker* and celebrated author; Jeffrey Goldberg, correspondent for *The Atlantic*, formerly of *The New Yorker* and celebrated author; Jacob Weisberg, editor of *Slate* and future celebrated author; Michael Ignatieff? Leon Wieseltier? Well, don't cry for them, Hillary Clinton.

Now examine the case of the complainant himself. Roger Cohen is the former foreign editor of the *New York Times*, now editor at large of the *International Herald Tribune*, author of its "Globalist" column, international writer at large for the *Times* and frequent guest columnist for its op-ed page. In these various capacities, he unleashed a double-barreled barrage of personal insults last December against what he called "hyperventilating left-liberals [whose] hatred of Bush is so intense that rational argument usually goes out the window." The column, which contained an avalanche of abuse, offered exactly one example: the nutty Scottish MP George Galloway, who had long ago been kicked out of the British Labour Party.

Cohen's more recent screed is, in some ways, even more nakedly dishonest. He attacks an essay by "leftist commentator" Matthew Yglesias for allegedly arguing that neoconservatives "believe that America should coercively dominate the world through military force" and "believe in a dogmatic form of American exceptionalism" and "favor the creation of a U.S.-dominated 'universal empire'" before asserting that "in these Walt-Mearsheimered days.... Neocon, for many, has become shorthand for neocon-Zionist conspiracy, whatever that may be, although probably involving some combination of plans to exploit Iraqi oil, bomb Iran and apply U.S. power to Israel's benefit."

But young Yglesias, a recovering liberal hawk himself, made no mention in his essay of Israel or Zionism, much less any alleged "conspiracy." Rather, he addressed Robert Kagan and William Kristol's argument for greater American belligerence toward China (among other places). And note Cohen's sly employment of the intellectually incoherent phrase "Walt-Mearsheimered days," which he uses to tar his opponents by association. (Later in the column, Cohen complains of something he calls the "Petraeus-insulting face of never-set-foot-in-a-war-zone liberalism.")

Cohen does not demonstrate much interest in evidence. As I was researching a previous column, I inquired in an e-mail if he might have any examples other than the discredited Galloway to support his indictment of "hyperventilating left-liberals," and he replied, "What makes you think you can express an informed opinion...?"

Faced with Michael Tomasky's evidence-filled reply to his recent column on the *Guardian*'s Comment Is Free website, Cohen responded with a personal attack on the "intolerable" fashion in which "a smug left personified by Michael Tomasky...can drone on about Iraq for 25 paragraphs or so without ever mentioning what Saddam's murder-central was like." He then suggested, "perhaps Tomasky should think a little more about how the Soviet Gulag slipped out of the awareness of wide swathes of the European and American left."

Note again how Cohen's insults are unburdened by evidence. Tomasky has never uttered a single sympathetic syllable about Saddam. Yet Cohen moves from Tomasky's opposition to the war to an implied complicity with the Soviet gulag. Cohen further weakens his argument by deploying the dishonest debating tactic—all too frequently used by neocons—of attributing sentiments gleaned from anonymous web postings to his intellectual adversaries: "Anyone who doubts that neocon is often shorthand for 'neo-con Zionist conspiracy,'" he writes, "should have his or her doubts laid to rest by reading the hundreds of comments [on Cohen's blog], some of them ugly."

It is unfortunate—though perhaps unavoidable—that those who love their country enough to persist in trying to rescue it from the myriad catastrophes caused by Messrs. Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld, etc., must endure such calumny. That this kind of McCarthyite missive should be published with the imprimatur of America's most important newspaper, and one whose editorial board gave eloquent voice to exactly the position so slandered, is not merely a shame but also a scandal. ■

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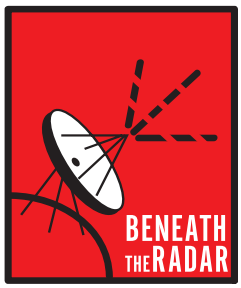
Gary Younge

Thieves of Black History

If Beale Street could talk, as James Baldwin famously imagined, then somewhere around Memphis's South Fourth Street it would let out an agonizing cry. Facing east, the garish neon commodification of the blues stands behind you—a trap for tourists and an insult to the legacy of a great musical tradition. Commerce here is thriving from a culture it doesn't respect. Ahead sprawls the desolation and poverty of the communities that gave blues its meaning and to whom the blues returned some dignity.

A block away at the Martin Luther King Jr. Labor Center, around eighty people have gathered to prevent the pilfering of yet more local black heritage. Twenty years ago, the Lorraine Motel, where King was assassinated, was turned into a National Civil Rights Museum. The chair of the executive committee of its board, J.R. "Pitt" Hyde III, is a wealthy white Republican. Charged with safeguarding a vital landmark in the nation's racial history, Hyde lobbied for the defeat of Harold Ford Jr.'s bid for the vacant Senate seat from Tennessee in what was widely regarded as the most racist campaign of the 2006 election. While Hyde has been representing the civil rights museum, the company he founded, AutoZone, has been embroiled in a longstanding EEOC racial discrimination lawsuit.



The board, on which blacks are a minority, is packed with those who dedicate their lives not to civil rights but to corporate profits. And they know how to do business. Recently the board discussed exercising an option to buy the museum building from the State of Tennessee, which owns it, for $1. (Apparently they never made a formal offer, as they knew it would be rejected.) Black history on sale at bargain prices.

For some, the moral price of surrendering such a crucial site to big money was too high. Community activists have been fighting back, battling not only for control of a building but the stewardship of history. "No race holds a monopoly of beauty, of intelligence, of strength," wrote Martiniquan poet and activist Aimé Césaire. "There is a place for all at the Rendezvous of Victory." But who gets which place and what stories they hear when they get there is determined by power, not happenstance.

The struggle over the future of the Lorraine Motel highlights three crucial developments in the nearly forty years since King was assassinated. First, it demonstrates how much of the civil rights agenda remains to be accomplished. King had been in Memphis campaigning for better pay and conditions for striking sanitation workers. "In the past in the civil rights movement, we have been dealing with segregation and all of its humiliation; we've been dealing with the political problem of the denial of the right to vote," he said ten days before he died. "I think it is absolutely necessary now to deal massively and militantly with the economic problem."

Hyde and the corporate agenda he represents remain at the core of that "problem," which keeps one in four Memphis residents (who are mostly black) below the poverty line.

The civil rights movement made great strides in achieving integration. But that victory prompted white supremacy to become more skillful and subtle in its bid for self-preservation. Segregation was outlawed, but its economic, social and cultural legacy was left intact. Black people in Memphis now have the right to go into any restaurant they like. Unfortunately, many cannot afford anything on the menu.

Second, the story of the Lorraine museum is a brazen example of the crude but effective manner in which the right, which fought so hard to thwart the work of the civil rights movement in its heyday, has sought to buy, co-opt or otherwise manipulate the movement's most popular emblems.

Four years ago fundamentalists stood on the steps of Alabama's Supreme Court building, waving Confederate flags and singing "We Shall Overcome" as they protested the removal of the Ten Commandments from the rotunda. A few months earlier, opponents of affirmative action went to the building to protest a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment—ratified to protect the rights of freed slaves. They called on universities to judge applicants not by "the color of their skin but by the content of their character," words of course lifted from King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

"Nowadays they like the fact that they can sit down to dinner at the site of the King assassination," says Circuit Judge D'Army Bailey, a founder of the museum who was ousted from the board. "It gives them a good feeling. Corporations want to be identified with it because that kind of identification brings pacification. It's been hijacked."

Finally, the struggle in Memphis shows that despite all this, the spirit of the civil rights movement—the grassroots campaigning, organizational commitment and moral purpose that mobilized so many—persists. "This is our history," said Ron Herd II, 27, during the public meeting at the labor center. "If we don't defend it, who will?"

Together, local campaigners and members of the Tennessee General Assembly's black caucus have blocked the board's bid to lease the museum for an extended period and effectively quashed its hopes of buying it outright—at least for now. Recently members of the City Council's park committee approved a motion that could lead to Memphis gaining control and working toward an agreement with the National Park Service similar to those at historical sites in Little Rock and Atlanta.

"Progress in human affairs," wrote E.H. Carr in *What Is History?*, "has come mainly through the bold readiness of human beings not to confine themselves to seeking piecemeal improvements in the way things are done, but to present fundamental challenges in the name of reason to the current way of doing things and to the avowed or hidden assumptions on which it rests." That was as true forty years ago on the streets of Memphis as it is today. ■

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THE NEW RIGHT-WING SMEAR MACHINE

E-mail turns out to be the ideal medium for the spreading of misinformation.

by CHRISTOPHER HAYES

On February 27, 2001, two members of the American Gold Star Mothers, an organization of women who've lost sons or daughters in combat, dropped by the temporary basement offices of the new junior senator from New York, Hillary Clinton. They didn't have an appointment, and the office, which had been up and running for barely a month, was a bit discombobulated. The two women wanted to talk to the senator about a bill pending in the Senate that would provide annuities for the parents of those killed, but they were told that Clinton wasn't in the office and that the relevant staff members were otherwise engaged. The organization later submitted a formal request in writing for a meeting, which Clinton granted, meeting and posing for pictures with four members of the group.

But the story doesn't end there. In May of that year, the right-wing website *NewsMax*, a clearinghouse for innuendo and rumor, ran a short item with the headline "Hillary Snubs Gold Star Mothers." Reporting via hearsay—a comment relayed to someone who then recounted it to the column's author—the article claimed that Clinton and her staff "simply refused" to meet with the Gold Star Mothers, making hers the "only office" in the Senate that snubbed the group.

At first the item didn't attract much attention, but it quickly morphed into an e-mail that started ricocheting across the Internet. "Bet this never hits the TV news!" began one version. "According to NewsMax.com there was only one politician in DC who refused to meet with these ladies. Can you guess which politician that might be?… None other than the Queen herself—the Hildebeast, Hillary Clinton."

Before long, the Gold Star Mothers and the Clinton office found themselves inundated by inquiries about the "snub," prompting the Gold Star Mothers to post a small item debunking the claim on their website. When that didn't stem the tide, they posted a lengthier notice. "These allegations were not initiated by the Gold Star Mothers.… This is a fabricated report picked up by an individual using the Gold Star Mothers as an instrument to discredit Senator Clinton.… We do not need mischeivous gossip and unfounded lies to promote our organization. Please help stop it now."

That plea notwithstanding, the e-mail continues to circulate to this day. Anyone who's been following politics for the past fifteen years won't be surprised to find Hillary Clinton the subject of a false and damning right-wing smear. We've all become familiar with the ways the Republican noise machine transmits lurid bits of misinformation and tendentious attacks from the conservative fringe into the heart of American political discourse, the process by which a slightly misdelivered joke by John Kerry attracts the ire of Rush Limbaugh and ends up on the front page of the *New York Times*.

But in some senses, the kind of under-the-radar attack embodied in the Gold Star e-mail—which never made the jump to Fox or Drudge—is even harder to deal with. "It's a Pandora's box," says Jim Kennedy, who served as Clinton's communications director during her first Senate term. "Once [the charges]

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are out in the ether, they are very hard to combat. It's very unlike a traditional media, newspaper or TV show, or even a blog, which at least has a fixed point of reference. You know they're traveling far and wide, but there's no way to rebut them with all the people that have seen them."

Such is the power of the right-wing smear forward, a vehicle for the dissemination of character assassination that has escaped the scrutiny directed at the Limbaughs and Coulters and O'Reillys but one that is as potent as it is invisible. In 2004 putative firsthand accounts of Kerry's performance in Vietnam traveled through e-mail in right-wing circles, presaging the Swift Boat attacks. Last winter a forward began circulating accusing Barack Obama of being a secret Muslim schooled in a radical madrassa (about which more later). While the story was later fed through familiar right-wing megaphones, even making it onto Fox, it has continued to circulate via e-mail long after being definitively debunked by CNN. In other words, the few weeks the smear spent in the glare of the mainstream media was just a tiny portion of a long life cycle, most of which has been spent darting from inbox to inbox.

What kind of havoc could be wreaked in 2008 by a few political operatives armed with little more than Outlook and a talent for gossip?

In that respect, the e-mail forward doesn't fit into our existing model of the right-wing noise machine's structure (hierarchical) or its approach (broadcast). It is, instead, organic and peer-to-peer. If the manufactured outrage over Kerry's botched joke about George Bush's study habits was the equivalent of a Hollywood blockbuster, the Gold Star Mother smear was like one of those goofy viral videos of a dog on a skateboard on YouTube. Of course, some of those videos end up with 25 million page views. And now that large media companies understand their potential, they've begun trying to create their own. Which prompts the obvious question: if a handful of millionaires and disgruntled Swift Boat Veterans were able to sabotage Kerry's campaign in 2004, what kind of havoc could be wreaked in 2008 by a few political operatives armed with little more than Outlook and a talent for gossip?

The smear forward has its roots in two distinct forms of Internet-age communication. First, there's the electronically disseminated urban legend ("Help find this missing child!"; "Bill Gates is going to pay people for every e-mail they send!"), which has been a staple of the Internet since the mid- '90s. Then there's the surreal genre of right-wing e-mail forwards. These range from creepy rage-filled quasi-fascist invocations ("The next time you see an adult talking…during the playing of the National Anthem—kick their ass") to treacly aphorisms of patriotic/religious uplift ("remember only two defining forces have ever offered to die for you, Jesus Christ…and the American Soldier").

For a certain kind of conservative, these e-mails, along with talk-radio, are an informational staple, a means of getting the real stories that the mainstream media ignore. "I get a million of them!" says Gerald DeSimone, a 74-year-old veteran from Ridgewood, New Jersey, who describes his politics as "to the right of Attila the Hun." "If I forwarded every one on, everyone would hate me.… I'm trying to cut back. I try to send no more than two or three a day. I must get thirty or forty a day."

Mike D'Asto, a 29-year-old assistant cameraman living in New York, received so many forwards from his conservative father he started a blog called MyRightWingDad.net, where he shares them with other unwitting recipients. "I suddenly have connected to all these people who receive these right-wing forwards from their brothers-in-law," D'Asto told me. "Surprisingly, a very large number of people receive these."

And that, of course, is the problem.

Rumormongering and whisper campaigns are as old as politics itself (throughout Thomas Jefferson's presidency opposition newspapers and pamphlets spread the word of his affair with Sally Hemings), but never has there been a medium as perfectly suited to the widespread anonymous diffusion of misinformation as e-mail. David Mikkelson, who, along with his wife, Barbara, founded and runs the website Snopes.com, knows this better than anyone. Devoted exclusively to debunking (and occasionally confirming) urban legends and e-mail-circulated apocrypha, Snopes attracts 4-5 million unique visitors a month, making it one of the Internet's most popular sites. In the early days, Mikkelson says, there were hardly any political urban legends, but that changed in 2000. "A lot of the things that were circulating in the world at large, things like ridiculing Al Gore for supposedly inventing the Internet," started to be passed along via e-mail, as well as "a photograph of Gore holding a gun intended to mock him for not holding it safely."

From the beginning, the vast majority of these Internet-disseminated rumors have come from the right. (Snopes lists about fifty e-mails about George W. Bush, split evenly between adulatory accounts of him saluting wounded soldiers or witnessing to a wayward teenager, and accounts of real and invented malapropisms. In contrast, every single one of the twenty-two e-mails about John Kerry is negative.) For conservatives, these e-mails neatly reinforce preconceptions, bending the facts of the world in line with their ideological framework: liberals, immigrants, hippies and celebrities are always the enemy; soldiers and conservatives, the besieged heroes. The stories of the former's perfidy and the latter's heroism are, of course, never told by the liberal media. So it's left to the conservative underground to get the truth out. And since the general story and the roles stay the same, often the actual characters are interchangeable.

"A lot of the chain letters that were accusing Al Gore of things in 2000 were recycled in 2004 and changed to Kerry," says John Ratliff, who runs a site called BreakTheChain.org, which, like Snopes, devotes itself to debunking chain e-mails. One e-mail falsely described a Senate committee hearing in the 1980s where Oliver North offered an impassioned Cassandra-like warning about the threat of Osama bin Laden, only to be

Christopher Hayes, a Nation *contributing writer and a Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow at The Nation Institute, is a senior editor of* In These Times.

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dismissed by a condescending Democratic senator. Originally it was Al Gore who played the role of the senator, but by 2004 it had changed to John Kerry. "You just plug in your political front-runner du jour," Ratliff says.

Even if many of the tropes were consistent, the tenor of the e-mails grew more aggressive between 2000 and 2004. "It got really nasty," says Ratliff. "You started seeing things reported as real news that, if you looked into it, you realized was opinion or supposition or someone trying to discredit another candidate through character assassination. You saw a lot of chain letters that purported to be from members of the Swift Boat group or firsthand accounts of people who supposedly had experience with Kerry in Vietnam. A lot of them didn't check out."

Aside from specious allegations about his military service, many of the e-mails attacking Kerry either emphasized his wealth (photos of each of his five residences) or relayed putative firsthand accounts of the senator acting like an imperious prick. Hal Cranmer, a former Air Force pilot, wrote a widely circulated account of his experience flying Kerry around Vietnam and Cambodia in 1991 in which Kerry scarfs pizza meant for the crew, forces the pilots to sit for an hour in an un-air-conditioned plane and boasts that he "never sail[s] on anything less than 135 feet." (Since it's a matter of historical record that Kerry has sailed boats smaller than 135 feet, this quote seems highly dubious.)

When I tracked down Cranmer during his lunch break at the aerospace manufacturing firm he works for in Minnesota, I was surprised to hear him ruefully recall his brush with Internet fame. "It gave me a real lesson. My wife says one of the reasons she married me is that I don't talk badly about people," he said with a laugh. "I really didn't mean to do that here."

In spring 2004, as John Kerry began to emerge as the probable nominee, Cranmer e-mailed his account to the libertarian website LewRockwell.com, where readers were sharing their personal experiences about meeting Kerry. "I said, OK, I'll put in my two cents.... I thought maybe I'd get one or two e-mails about it and it would just disappear." That was not to be. "All of a sudden I was getting fifty e-mails a day. I had an annual meeting with the Air Force pilots, and a friend said, 'Tell your story about John Kerry,' and everyone in the room was going, 'I got that e-mail! That was you?' I had neighbors walking in and saying, 'Hey, I got an e-mail about you.' I was trying to keep this low-key, not try to ruin an election here. I was just relating an experience that happened to me. People drew all kinds of crazy conclusions from it other than I had a bad experience with him." Added Cranmer, "Maybe he's the nicest guy in the world, and he was in a bad mood going into Vietnam.... I really didn't mean this to be as huge as it was."

Cranmer told me he was a libertarian and a big fan of Ron Paul. "I voted for Bush in 2000 and have regretted it ever since. I didn't even vote in 2004." He now wishes he'd kept his impressions to himself. Some anecdote of casual thoughtlessness "shouldn't be what defines the presidency."

But of course, that's exactly the kind of thing that did de-

In an age when man has forgotten his origins and is blind even to his most essential needs for survival, water along with other resources has become the victim of his indifference.

- Rachel Carson

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fine the last presidential election. Cranmer's e-mail, and those of a similar ilk, were perfectly in line with the broader narrative of the Bush campaign, in which the major knock on Kerry was that he was an elitist, disingenuous jerk—a "bad man," in Lynne Cheney's phrasing. Like the other popular e-mails that circulated in 2004, Cranmer's includes not a single substantive criticism of Kerry's platform or policy preferences, but the unflattering picture it offers has an effect that's immediate and visceral. It lingers in the back of one's head.

It was similar gossip that helped spell doom for John McCain during the South Carolina primary in 2000, when a whisper campaign spread rumors that he had a black daughter out of wedlock. "John McCain was done in by leaflets put on cars in church parking lots," says Democratic campaign consultant Chris Lehane. Forwarded e-mails, he says, "are the digital version of this and potentially more pernicious and far-reaching because of the obvious efficiencies of the online world. I would fully expect to see it manifesting in the GOP primary." Sure enough, a few weeks after I spoke to Lehane, Mike Huckabee's Iowa state campaign chair, Bob Vander Plaats, issued a statement denying that he'd written an e-mail that voters had received bearing his name. In that hoax e-mail, someone impersonating Vander Plaats announced that he was dropping Huckabee because of low fundraising numbers and backing Mitt Romney instead and urging others to do the same.

Faced with dubious attacks, circulating below the radar, campaigns find themselves in a familiar bind, one that handcuffed Kerry in 2004 when the Swift Boat charges first cropped up in ads, talk-radio and e-mail. If you respond, you run the risk of bringing the original false accusation to a wider audience. This is particularly true when the e-mails don't even have a putative author attached. "For lots of these e-mails, there's never any definable source," says Mikkelson. "They just seem to come out of nowhere."

That leads to the $64,000 question: are these anonymous attacks organic emanations of the diffuse political consciousness, or are they deliberately seeded by professional political operators? Mikkelson is skeptical that anyone could intentionally write the kind of e-mail that would take off virally. "Even people who are steeped in it, it's very, very difficult to start something deliberately that will catch on." Still, there's some evidence it's been done. Snopes determined that a gushing pro-Bush e-mail from 2004 about watching the President worship in the pews of St. John's Church in Washington was actually written by the press spokeswoman for Republican Senator Lamar Alexander. Her name is Laura Lefler, and she now works for Senator Bob Corker. I tried to contact Lefler to get a sense of what inspired her to write the e-mail and how, exactly, she disseminated it, but she wouldn't return my calls or e-mails.

The most notorious smear forward of this cycle is the Obama/madrassa canard, which represents the cutting edge of electronic rumor. At least two weeks before the Obama/madrassa smear appeared in the online magazine *Insight*, on January 17, it had been circulating widely in an e-mail forward that laid out the basics of Obama's bio in a flat, reportorial tone before concluding thus:

> Obama takes great care to conceal the fact that he is a Muslim.… Lolo Soetoro, the second husband of Obama's mother…introduced his stepson to Islam. Osama was enrolled in a Wahabi school in Jakarta. Wahabism is the radical teaching that is followed by the Muslim terrorists who are now waging Jihad against the western world. Since it is politically expedient to be a Christian when seeking major public office in the United States, Barack Hussein Obama has joined the United Church of Christ in an attempt to downplay his Muslim background.
>
> Let us all remain alert concerning Obama's expected presidential candidacy.

Did you catch that typo in the crucial sentence? And the strategic deployment of Obama's middle name? It's a coldly effective bit of slander: a single damning lie (the school Obama attended was a run-of-the mill public elementary school) snuggled tightly within a litany of mundane facts, followed by dark insinuation.

Who wrote it? The unsatisfying answer is, we'll probably never know. "The thing to keep in mind about e-mail is that there is absolutely zero built-in security or data integrity," my friend Paul Smith, a software developer with EveryBlock.com, explained to me when I asked him if there was any way I could trace the Obama e-mail to its original author. "That's why there is spam. I could construct an e-mail from scratch and deliver it and have it seem like it was coming from Steve Jobs, and for all intents and purposes the receiver would have no way of knowing it wasn't from Cupertino."

But even if the identity of the e-mail's author was unrecoverable, it was still possible to trace back the roots of its content. The origin proved even more bizarre than I could have guessed.

On August 10, 2004, just two weeks after Obama had given his much-heralded keynote speech at the DNC in Boston, a perennial Republican Senate candidate and self-described "independent contrarian columnist" named Andy Martin issued a press release. In it, he announced a press conference in which he would expose Obama for having "lied to the American people" and "misrepresent[ed] his own heritage."

Martin raised all kinds of strange allegations about Obama but focused on him attempting to hide his Muslim past. "It may well be that his concealment is meant to endanger Israel," read Martin's statement. "His Muslim religion would obviously raise serious questions in many Jewish circles where Obama now enjoys support."

A quick word about Andy Martin. During a 1983 bankruptcy case he referred to a federal judge as a "crooked, slimy Jew, who has a history of lying and thieving common to members of his race." Martin, who in the past was known as Anthony Martin-Trigona, is one of the most notorious litigants in the history of the United States. He's filed hundreds, possibly thousands, of lawsuits, often directed at judges who have ruled against him, or media outlets that cover him unfavorably. A 1993 opinion by the US Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, in Atlanta, described these lawsuits as "a cruel and effective weapon against his enemies," and called Martin a "notoriously vexatious and vindictive litigator who has long abused the American legal system." He once even

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attempted to intervene in the divorce proceedings of a judge who'd ruled against him, petitioning the state court to be appointed as the guardian of the judge's children.

When I asked Martin for the source of his allegations about Obama's past, he told me they came from "people in London, among other places." Why London, I asked? "I started talking to them about Kenyan law. Every little morsel led me a little farther along."

Within a few days of Martin's press conference, the conservative site *Free Republic* had picked it up, attracting a long comment thread, but after that small blip the specious "questions" about Obama's background disappeared. Then, in the fall of 2006, as word got out that Obama was considering a presidential run, murmurs on the Internet resumed. In October a conservative blog called Infidel Bloggers Alliance reposted the Andy Martin press release under the title "Is Barack Obama Lying About His Life Story?" A few days later the online *RumorMillNews* also reposted the Andy Martin press release in response to a reader's inquiry about whether Obama was a Muslim. Then in December fringe right-wing activist Ted Sampley posted a column on the web raising the possibility that Obama was a secret Muslim. Sampley, who co-founded Vietnam Veterans Against John Kerry and once accused John McCain of having been a KGB asset, quoted heavily from Martin's original press release. "When Obama was six," Sampley wrote, "his mother, an atheist, married Lolo Soetoro, an Indonesian Muslim, and moved to Jakarta, Indonesia.… Soetoro enrolled his stepson in one of Jakarta's Muslim Wahabbi schools. Wahabbism is the radical teaching that created the Muslim terrorists who are now waging Jihad on the rest of the world."

On December 29, 2006, the very same day that Sampley posted his column, Snopes received its first copy of the e-mail forward, which contains an identical charge in strikingly similar language. Given the timing, it seems likely that it was a distillation of Sampley's work.

Despite the fact that CNN and others have thoroughly debunked the smear, the original false accusation has clearly sunk into people's consciousness. One Obama organizer told me recently that every day, while calling prospective voters, he gets at least one or two people who tell him they won't be voting for Obama because he's a Muslim. According to Google, "Barack Obama Muslim" is the third most-searched term for the Illinois senator. And an August CBS poll found that when voters were asked to give Obama's religion, as many said Muslim as correctly answered Protestant.

Oh yeah. And the e-mail continues to circulate.

"Everybody started calling me" when the e-mail first made the rounds, Andy Martin told me. "They said, 'Hey, did you write this?' My answer was 'they are all my children.'" ■

Beyond the Age of Petroleum

Most geologists believe we're nearing peak oil production. After that—a steady decline.

By MICHAEL T. KLARE

This past May, in an unheralded and almost unnoticed move, the Energy Department signaled a fundamental, near epochal shift in US and indeed world history: we are nearing the end of the Petroleum Age and have entered the Age of Insufficiency. The department stopped talking about "oil" in its projections of future petroleum availability and began speaking of "liquids." The global output of "liquids," the department indicated, would rise from 84 million barrels of oil equivalent (mboe) per day in 2005 to a projected 117.7 mboe in 2030—barely enough to satisfy anticipated world demand of 117.6 mboe. Aside from suggesting the degree to which oil companies have ceased being mere suppliers of petroleum and are now purveyors of a wide variety of liquid products—including synthetic fuels derived from natural gas, corn, coal and other substances—this change hints at something more fundamental: we have entered a new era of intensified energy competition and growing reliance on the use of force to protect overseas sources of petroleum.

AP PHOTO/JEFF MCINTOSH

Mining the oil-laden tar sands in Alberta, Canada.

To appreciate the nature of the change, it is useful to probe a bit deeper into the Energy Department's curious terminology. "Liquids," the department explains in its International Energy Outlook for 2007, encompasses "conventional" petroleum as well as "unconventional" liquids—notably tar sands (bitumen),

Michael T. Klare, The Nation*'s defense correspondent, is professor of peace and world security studies at Hampshire College. His latest book is* Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet *(forthcoming next spring from Metropolitan).*

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oil shale, biofuels, coal-to-liquids and gas-to-liquids. Once a relatively insignificant component of the energy business, these fuels have come to assume much greater importance as the output of conventional petroleum has faltered. Indeed, the Energy Department projects that unconventional liquids production will jump from a mere 2.4 mboe per day in 2005 to 10.5 in 2030, a fourfold increase. But the real story is not the impressive growth in unconventional fuels but the stagnation in conventional oil output. Looked at from this perspective, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the switch from "oil" to "liquids" in the department's terminology is a not so subtle attempt to disguise the fact that worldwide oil production is at or near its peak capacity and that we can soon expect a downturn in the global availability of conventional petroleum.

Petroleum is, of course, a finite substance, and geologists have long warned of its ultimate disappearance. The extraction of oil, like that of other nonrenewable resources, will follow a parabolic curve over time. Production rises quickly at first and then gradually slows until approximately half the original supply has been exhausted; at that point, a peak in sustainable output is attained and production begins an irreversible decline until it becomes too expensive to lift what little remains. Most oil geologists believe we have already reached the midway point in the depletion of the world's original petroleum inheritance and so are nearing a peak in global output; the only real debate is over how close we have come to that point, with some experts claiming we are at the peak now and others saying it is still a few years or maybe a decade away.

Senior figures in both political parties are calling for a reinvigorated US military role in the protection of foreign energy deliveries.

Until very recently, Energy Department analysts were firmly in the camp of those wild-eyed optimists who claimed that peak oil was so far in the future that we didn't really need to give it much thought. Putting aside the science of the matter, the promulgation of such a rose-colored view obviated any need to advocate improvements in automobile fuel efficiency or to accelerate progress on the development of alternative fuels. Given White House priorities, it is hardly surprising that this view prevailed in Washington.

In just the past six months, however, the signs of an imminent peak in conventional oil production have become impossible even for conservative industry analysts to ignore. These have come from the take-no-prisoners world of oil pricing and deal-making, on the one hand, and the analysis of international energy experts, on the other.

Most dramatic, perhaps, has been the spectacular rise in oil prices. The price of light, sweet crude crossed the longstanding psychological barrier of $80 per barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange for the first time in September, and has since risen to as high as $90. Many reasons have been cited for the rise in crude prices, including unrest in Nigeria's oil-producing Delta region, pipeline sabotage in Mexico, increased hurricane activity in the Gulf of Mexico and fears of Turkish attacks on Kurdish guerrilla sanctuaries in Iraq. But the underlying reality is that most oil-producing countries are pumping at maximum capacity and finding it increasingly difficult to boost production in the face of rising international demand.

Even a decision by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to boost production by 500,000 barrels per day failed to halt the upward momentum in prices. Concerned that an excessive rise in oil costs would trigger a worldwide recession and lower demand for their products, the OPEC countries agreed to increase their combined output at a meeting in Vienna on September 11. "We think that the market is a little bit high," explained Kuwait's acting oil minister, Mohammad al-Olaim. But the move did little to slow the rise in prices. Clearly, OPEC would have to undertake a much larger production increase to alter the market environment, and it is not at all clear that its members possess the capacity to do that—now or in the future.

A warning sign of another sort was provided by Kazakhstan's August decision to suspend development of the giant Kashagan oil region in its sector of the Caspian Sea, first initiated by a consortium of Western firms in the late '90s. Kashagan was said to be the most promising oil project since the discovery of oil in Alaska's Prudhoe Bay in the late '60s. But the enterprise has encountered enormous technical problems and has yet to produce a barrel of oil. Frustrated by a failure to see any economic benefits from the project, the Kazakh government has cited environmental risks and cost overruns to justify suspending operations and demanding a greater say in the project.

Like the dramatic rise in oil prices, the Kashagan episode is an indication of the oil industry's growing difficulties in its efforts to boost production in the face of rising demand. "All the oil companies are struggling to grow production," Peter Hitchens of Teather & Greenwood brokerage told the *Wall Street Journal* in July. "It's becoming more and more difficult to bring projects in on time and on budget."

That this industry debilitation is not a temporary problem but symptomatic of a long-term trend was confirmed in two important studies published this past summer by conservative industry organizations.

The first of these was released July 9 by the International Energy Agency (IEA), an affiliate of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the club of major industrial powers. Titled *Medium-Term Oil Market Report*, it is a blunt assessment of the global supply-and-demand equation over the 2007–12 period. The news is not good.

Predicting that world economic activity will grow by an average of 4.5 percent per year during this period—much of it driven by unbridled growth in China, India and the Middle East—the report concludes that global oil demand will rise by 2.2 percent per year, pushing world oil consumption from approximately 86 million barrels per day in 2007 to 96 million in 2012. With luck and massive new investment, the oil industry will be able to increase output sufficiently to satisfy the higher level of demand anticipated for 2012—barely. Beyond that, however, there appears little likelihood that the industry will be

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able to sustain any increase in demand. "Oil look[s] extremely tight in five years' time," the agency declared.

Underlying the report's general conclusion are a number of specific concerns. Most notably, it points to a worrisome decline in the yield of older fields in non-OPEC countries and a corresponding need for increased output from the OPEC countries, most of which are located in conflict-prone areas of the Middle East and Africa. The numbers involved are staggering. At first blush, it would seem that the need for an extra 10 million barrels per day between now and 2012 would translate into an added 2 million barrels per day in each of the next five years—a conceivably attainable goal. But that doesn't take into account the decline of older fields. According to the report, the world actually needs an extra 5 million: 3 million to make up for the decline in older fields plus the 2 million in added requirements. This is a daunting and possibly insurmountable challenge, especially when one considers that almost all of the additional petroleum will have to come from Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Angola, Libya, Nigeria, Sudan, Kazakhstan and Venezuela—countries that do not inspire the sort of investor confidence that will be needed to pour hundreds of billions of dollars into new drilling rigs, pipelines and other essential infrastructure.

Similar causes for anxiety can be found in the second major study released last summer, *Facing the Hard Truths About Energy*, prepared by the National Petroleum Council, a major industry organization. Because it supposedly provided a "balanced" view of the nation's energy dilemma, the NPC report was widely praised on Capitol Hill and in the media; adding to its luster was the identity of its chief author, former ExxonMobil CEO Lee Raymond.

Like the IEA report, the NPC study starts with the claim that, with the right mix of policies and higher investment, the industry is capable of satisfying US and international oil and natural gas demand. "Fortunately, the world is not running out of energy resources," the report bravely asserts. But obstacles to the development and delivery of these resources abound, so prudent policies and practices are urgently required. Although "there is no single, easy solution to the multiple challenges we face," the authors conclude, they are "confident that the prompt adoption of these strategies" will allow the United States to satisfy its long-term energy needs.

Read further into the report, however, and serious doubts emerge. Here again, worries arise from the growing difficulties of extracting oil and gas from less-favorable locations and the geopolitical risks associated with increased reliance on unfriendly and unstable suppliers. According to the NPC (using data acquired from the IEA), an estimated $20 trillion in new infrastructure will be needed over the next twenty-five years to ensure that sufficient energy is available to satisfy anticipated worldwide demand.

The report then states the obvious: "A stable and attractive investment climate will be necessary to attract adequate capital for evolution and expansion of the energy infrastructure." This is where any astute observer should begin to get truly alarmed, for, as the study notes, no such climate can be expected. As the center of gravity of world oil production shifts decisively to OPEC suppliers and state-centric energy producers like Russia, geopolitical rather than market factors will come to dominate the marketplace.

"These shifts pose profound implications for U.S. interests, strategies, and policy-making," the NPC report states. "Many of the expected changes could heighten risks to U.S. energy security in a world where U.S. influence is likely to decline as economic power shifts to other nations. In years to come, security threats to the world's main sources of oil and natural gas may worsen."

The implications are obvious: major investors are not likely to cough up the trillions of dollars needed to substantially boost production in the years ahead, suggesting that the global output of conventional petroleum will not reach the elevated levels predicted by the Energy Department but will soon begin an irreversible decline.

This conclusion leads to two obvious strategic impulses: first, the government will seek to ease the qualms of major energy investors by promising to protect their overseas investments through the deployment of American military forces; and second, the industry will seek to hedge its bets by shifting an ever-increasing share of its investment funds into the development of nonpetroleum liquids.

Government and industry officials will be seeking greater development of oil alternatives that can be procured at home or in Canada.

The New 'Washington Consensus'

The need for a vigorous US military role in protecting energy assets abroad has been a major theme in American foreign policy since 1945, when President Roosevelt met with King Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia and promised to protect the kingdom in return for privileged access to Saudi oil.

In the most famous expression of this linkage, President Carter affirmed in January 1980 that the unimpeded flow of Persian Gulf oil is among this country's vital interests and that to protect this interest, the United States will employ "any means necessary, including military force." This principle was later cited by President Reagan as the rationale for "reflagging" Kuwaiti oil tankers with the American ensign during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980–88 and protecting them with US warships—a stance that led to sporadic clashes with Iran. The same principle was subsequently invoked by George H.W. Bush as a justification for the Gulf War of 1991.

In considering these past events, it is important to recognize that the use of military force to protect the flow of imported petroleum has generally enjoyed broad bipartisan support in Washington. Initially, this bipartisan outlook was largely focused on the Persian Gulf area, but since 1990, it has been extended to other areas as well. President Clinton eagerly pursued close military ties with the Caspian Sea oil states of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan after the breakup of the USSR in 1991, while George W. Bush has avidly sought an increased US mili-

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tary presence in Africa's oil-producing regions, going so far as to favor the establishment of a US Africa Command (Africom) in February.

One might imagine that the current debacle in Iraq would shake this consensus, but there is no evidence that this is so. In fact, the opposite appears to be the case: possibly fearful that the chaos in Iraq will spread to other countries in the Gulf region, senior figures in both parties are calling for a reinvigorated US military role in the protection of foreign energy deliveries.

Perhaps the most explicit expression of this elite consensus is an independent task force report, *National Security Consequences of U.S. Oil Dependency*, backed by many prominent Democrats and Republicans. It was released by the bipartisan Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), co-chaired by John Deutch, deputy secretary of defense in the Clinton Administration, and James Schlesinger, defense secretary in the Nixon and Ford administrations, in October 2006. The report warns of mounting perils to the safe flow of foreign oil. Concluding that the United States alone has the capacity to protect the global oil trade against the threat of violent obstruction, it argues the need for a strong US military presence in key producing areas and in the sea lanes that carry foreign oil to American shores.

An awareness of this new "Washington consensus" on the need to protect overseas oil supplies with American troops helps explain many recent developments in Washington. Most significant, it illuminates the strategic stance adopted by President Bush in justifying his determination to retain a potent US force in Iraq—and why the Democrats have found it so difficult to contest that stance.

Consider Bush's September 13 prime-time speech on Iraq. "If we were to be driven out of Iraq," he prophesied, "extremists of all strains would be emboldened.... Iran would benefit from the chaos and would be encouraged in its efforts to gain nuclear weapons and dominate the region. Extremists could control a key part of the global energy supply." And then came the kicker: "Whatever political party you belong to, whatever your position on Iraq, we should be able to agree that America has a vital interest in preventing chaos and providing hope in the Middle East." In other words, Iraq is no longer about democracy or WMDs or terrorism but about maintaining regional stability to ensure the safe flow of petroleum and keep the American economy on an even keel; it was almost as if he was speaking to the bipartisan crowd that backed the CFR report cited above.

It is very clear that the Democrats, or at least mainstream Democrats, are finding it exceedingly difficult to contest this argument head-on. In March, for example, Senator Hillary Clinton told the *New York Times* that Iraq is "right in the heart of the oil region" and so "it is directly in opposition to our interests" for it to become a failed state or a pawn of Iran. This means, she continued, that it will be necessary to keep some US troops in Iraq indefinitely, to provide logistical and training support to the Iraqi military. Senator Barack Obama has also spoken of the need to maintain a robust US military presence in Iraq and the surrounding area. Thus, while calling for the withdrawal of most US combat brigades from Iraq proper, he has championed an "over-the-horizon force that could prevent chaos in the wider region."

Given this perspective, it is very hard for mainstream Democrats to challenge Bush when he says that an "enduring" US military presence is needed in Iraq or to change the Administration's current policy, barring a major military setback or some other unforeseen event. By the same token, it will be hard for the Democrats to avert a US attack on Iran if this can be portrayed as a necessary move to prevent Tehran from threatening the long-term safety of Persian Gulf oil supplies.

Nor can we anticipate a dramatic change in US policy in the Gulf region from the next administration, whether Democratic or Republican. If anything, we should expect an increase in the use of military force to protect the overseas flow of oil, as the threat level rises along with the need for new investment to avert even further reductions in global supplies.

The Rush to Alternative Liquids

Although determined to keep expanding the supply of conventional petroleum for as long as possible, government and industry officials are aware that at some point these efforts will prove increasingly ineffective. They also know that public pressure to reduce carbon dioxide emissions—thus slowing the accumulation of climate-changing greenhouse gases—and to avoid exposure to conflict in the Middle East is sure to increase in the years ahead. Accordingly, they are placing greater emphasis on the development of oil alternatives that can be procured at home or in neighboring Canada.

The new emphasis was first given national attention in Bush's latest State of the Union address. Stressing energy independence and the need to modernize fuel economy standards, he announced an ambitious plan to increase domestic production of ethanol and other biofuels. The Administration appears to favor several types of petroleum alternatives: ethanol derived from corn stover, switch grass and other nonfood crops (cellulosic ethanol); diesel derived largely from soybeans (biodiesel); and liquids derived from coal (coal-to-liquids), natural gas (gas-to-liquids) and oil shale. All of these methods are being tested in university laboratories and small-scale facilities, and will be applied in larger, commercial-sized ventures in coming years with support from various government agencies.

In February, for example, the Energy Department announced grants totaling $385 million for the construction of six pilot plants to manufacture cellulosic ethanol; when completed in 2012, these "biorefineries" will produce more than 130 million gallons of cellulosic ethanol per year. (The United States already produces large quantities of ethanol by cooking and fermenting corn kernels, a process that consumes vast amounts of energy and squanders a valuable food crop while supplanting only a small share of our petroleum usage; the proposed cellulosic plants would use nonfood biomass as a feedstock and consume far less energy.)

Just as eager to develop petroleum alternatives are the large energy companies, all of which have set up laboratories or divisions to explore future energy options. BP has been especially aggressive; in 2005 it established BP Alternative Energy and set aside $8 billion for this purpose. This past February the new spinoff announced a $500 million grant—possibly the largest of its kind in history—to the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Illinois and Lawrence Berkeley National

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The Creation of Man, detail showing God Almighty, by Michelangelo, 1508-12, The Sistine Chapel, Rome.

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Laboratory to establish an Energy Biosciences Institute with the aim of developing biofuels. BP said the institute "is expected to explore the application of bioscience [to] the production of new and cleaner energy, principally fuels for road transport."

Just about every large oil company is placing a heavy bet on Canadian tar sands—a gooey substance found in Canada's Alberta province that can be converted into synthetic petroleum—but only with enormous effort and expense. According to the Energy Department, Canadian bitumen production will rise from 1.1 mboe in 2005 to 3.6 mboe in 2030, an increase that is largely expected to be routed to the United States. Hoping to cash in on this bonanza, giant US corporations like Chevron are racing to buy up leases in the bitumen fields of northern Alberta.

But while attractive from a geopolitical perspective, extracting Canadian tar sands is environmentally destructive. It takes vast quantities of energy to recover the bitumen and convert it into a usable liquid, releasing three times as much greenhouse gases as conventional oil production; the resulting process leaves toxic water supplies and empty moonscapes in its wake. Although rarely covered in the US press, opposition in Canada to the environmental damage wreaked by these mammoth operations is growing.

Environmental factors loom large in yet another potential source of liquids being pursued by US energy firms, with strong government support: shale oil, or petroleum liquids pried from immature rock found in the Green River basin of western Colorado, eastern Utah and southern Wyoming. Government geologists claim that shale rock in the United States holds the equivalent of 2.1 trillion barrels of oil—the same as the original world supply of conventional petroleum. However, the only way to recover this alleged treasure is to strip-mine a vast wilderness area and heat the rock to 500 degrees Celsius, creating mountains of waste material in the process. Here too, opposition is growing to this massively destructive assault on the environment. Nevertheless, Shell Oil has established a pilot plant in Rio Blanco County in western Colorado with strong support from the Bush Administration.

Life After the Peak

And so we have a portrait of the global energy situation after the peak of conventional petroleum, with troops being rushed from one oil-producing hot spot to another and a growing share of our transportation fuel being supplied by nonpetroleum liquids of one sort or another. Exactly what form this future energy equation will take cannot be foreseen with precision, but it is obvious that the arduous process will shape American policy debates, domestic and foreign, for a long time.

As this brief assessment suggests, the passing of peak oil will have profound and lasting consequences for this country, with no easy solutions. In facing this future, we must, above all, disavow any simple answers, such as energy "independence" based on the pillage of America's remaining wilderness areas or the false promise of corn-based ethanol (which can supply only a tiny fraction of our transportation requirements). It is clear, moreover, that many of the fuel alternatives proposed by the Bush Administration pose significant dangers of their own and so should be examined carefully before vast public sums are committed to their development. The safest and most morally defensible course is to repudiate any "consensus" calling for the use of force to protect overseas petroleum supplies and to strive to conserve what remains of the world's oil by using less of it. ■

The Kids Aren't Alright

Florida is ground zero in the nation's childcare crisis.

by SHARON LERNER

Alexandria, a pudgy 10-month-old with pink bows clipped to her tiny ponytails, is waiting. Propped up on a pillow in the tidy living room of her apartment in Palm Beach, she's calmly swigging warm formula while her mother gets ready for work. Soon she'll be buckled into her car seat and whisked off. To where? She must wait to find out. Most days she goes to a lady's house a few minutes away, but sometimes she winds up at her uncle's apartment or with a friend of her mom's. If she could, Alexandria might tell you that what she's really waiting for is one safe place to be every day while her mother works. And she might have to wait a very long time.

Alexandria is on a waiting list for subsidized care along with more than 45,000 other children in Florida and almost half a million around the country. Countless families would welcome a break in childcare costs. Working parents now spend more on childcare than they do on college tuition, food, car payments or, in many states, rent. But even to make it onto a waiting list, families must meet strict income criteria set by states to sift out all but the neediest of needy families. Alexandria's mother, Denise, for instance, is raising four children while working full-time as an assistant case worker for a family service agency. Having earned just $19,000 last year, Denise is eligible for aid—and she made sure to request it right after her daughter was born. But still they wait.

Across the country, families in dire financial situations qualify for help—but don't get it because the funds aren't there. Of the more than 15 million children entitled to childcare help nationwide in 2000, only one out of seven received it, according to the Washington-based advocacy group the Center

Sharon Lerner, a senior fellow at the Center for New York City Affairs at the New School, is writing a book about the lack of public support for American women.

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for Law and Social Policy. The government has been offering some of the poorest working families subsidies to care for their children since at least 1974. Yet, while both the number of women in the workforce and the price of care relative to wages have shot up since then, government spending on daycare hasn't risen accordingly. And the backup appears to be worsening. Because there has been no increase in funding for childcare since the Bush Administration took power, some 300,000 children are expected to lose childcare assistance by 2010.

What happens to these babies, toddlers and school-aged kids while their parents work? For Alexandria, the usual setup is far from ideal. The woman who cares for her is elderly, leaves the TV on for much of the day and charges $150 a week, which strains Denise's tight budget. Perhaps most frustrating, she's sometimes unavailable, as she is today. Denise has a plan B: Alexandria's uncle agreed to look after the baby this morning. But when she calls him from her car as she heads toward his apartment, he doesn't answer his phone.

What's a woman who's late for work to do when her baby sitters go AWOL? Denise pulls into a gas station to ponder this question. If she brings Alexandria to work, which begins with three hours of driving to pick up a child in foster care and bring him to visit his mother, she risks losing her job. But she doesn't know any other trustworthy baby sitters. And the choice between endangering her job or her baby is an easy one. So, as she's done on more than one occasion in the past, she heaves a big sigh and drives off to work with her infant daughter in the back seat.

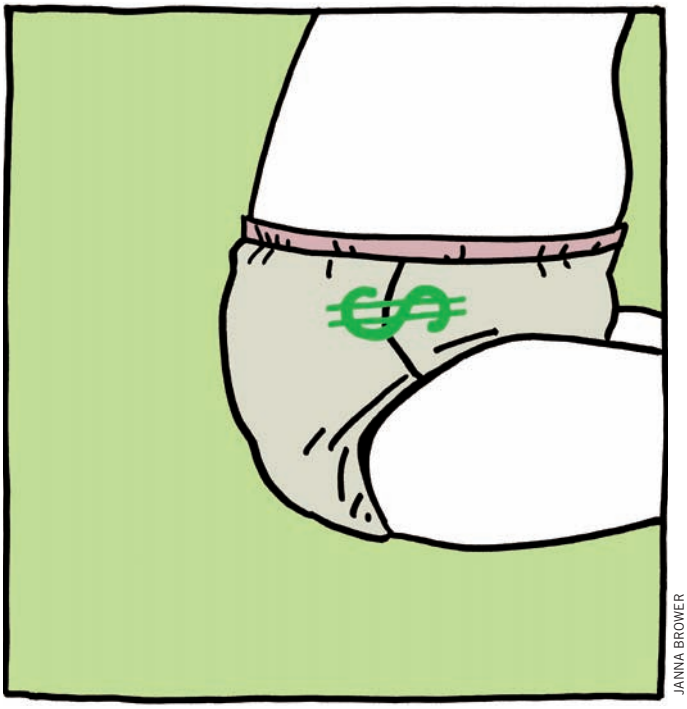
Other children on Florida's waiting list, like little 1-and-a-half-year-old Valerie, a smiley toddler whose dark hair is in a pageboy, go to decent preschools at great expense to their parents. Four out of ten single mothers who pay for childcare spend half or more of their income on it, and many can only afford the dicier options. But Valerie's mom, Glabedys, is pleased with the center where her daughter spends her days. When she drops Valerie off at Busy Bees Pre-School, housed in two toy-filled buildings in Wilton Manors, she runs off to play instead of crying and clinging to her mother, as she used to when she was left with neighbors. She's been learning about colors and shapes. And she clearly likes her teachers.

But while Valerie remains on the waiting list for a subsidy to pay for her care, Glabedys pays her preschool fees with money she would have spent on groceries. Though she works full-time at a factory that makes hurricane protection gates, Glabedys couldn't even afford her apartment after the $135-a-week outlay to Busy Bees. So she rented storage space for most of her things and a small room in a house where the two now live. They survive on donations from a local food pantry.

Some other parents who can't afford care go into debt, putting the fees for childcare on their credit cards. Still others leave their children home with older siblings—a phenomenon that contributes to the state's truancy problem, according to local child advocates. And some stay home with their children despite a desperate need for income. Not surprisingly, research has shown that parents who receive help paying for childcare are more likely to be employed and have higher incomes.

Conversely, those who don't are more likely to stay home with their children and scrape by on next to nothing.

Such was the case for Heather Tomlinson. When I interviewed her, Tomlinson, her 16-month-old son Ian and her school-aged daughter were living on the extremely variable paycheck of her boyfriend, who installs leather upholstery in cars and is paid by the car. Even on good weeks, his income barely covered the family's expenses. So Tomlinson applied for help with childcare when Ian was born. Stuck on the waiting list, she couldn't envision how to afford care that would enable her to interview for a job, let alone keep it. Yet because she didn't work, she was labeled a low priority on the waiting



JANNA BROWER

list. So the family was squeaking by. She mentioned that she recently had only eight diapers to last her son for three days. "I had to leave each one on a little longer than I should have," she said. "Eventually he got a rash."

Unfortunately, Ian's diaper rash and Valerie's donated food get no airtime in the national shouting match over childcare, or at least the mainstream media's coverage of it, which seems to be an endless loop of condemnations and defenses of both daycare and working mothers. Earlier this year, researcher Jay Belsky warned parents that children who spent time in the care of anyone except their mothers were more likely than those cared for by stay-at-home moms to exhibit bad behavior as preschoolers and kindergartners. Even though the study found only a slight connection between time spent in daycare and bad behavior, and the behavior was all within the normal range, the link between daycare and bad behavior made it into the headlines. And a chorus of conservatives quickly declared daycare a bad thing. Meanwhile, there was little mention of the fact that there are great variations in childcare—or that children in good care tend to do better.

In fact, the clear association between better care and better outcomes is one of the major truths to emerge from Belsky's research, *Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development*. This finding has two important corollaries, both of which the country seems to have a hard time stomaching. First, the good

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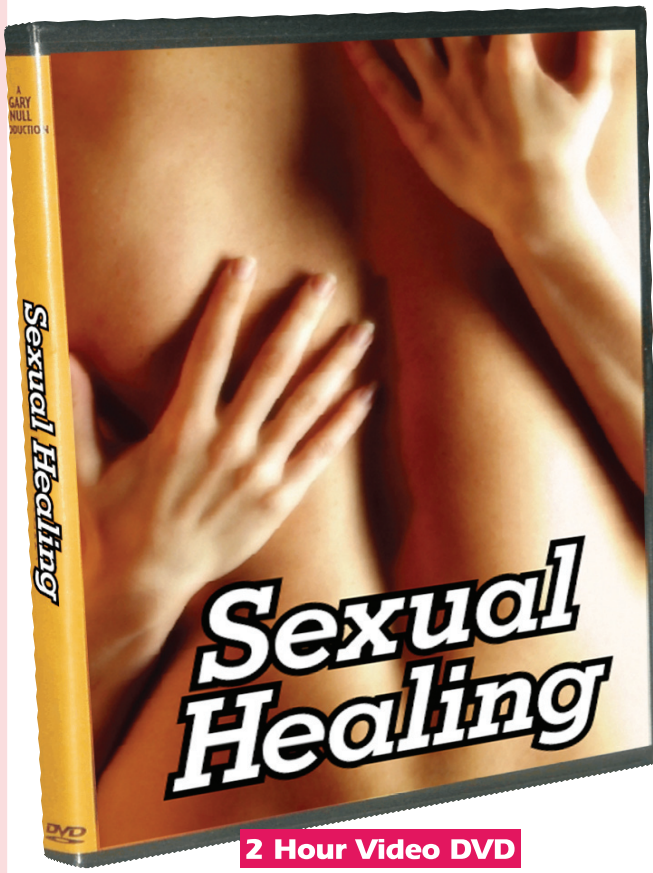

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care in which children do well costs money. There's plenty of research on what that good care should entail. Among other things, preschoolers need one-on-one attention, consistent relationships with trained, knowledgeable adults, and safe settings complete with educational toys and books—all of which are expensive.

The second reality that is perhaps even more difficult to confront, especially for proponents of childcare, is that without these expenditures, childcare can be pretty bad. And it's not just poor kids on the waiting list who are in lousy care. Parents who are lucky enough to get subsidies can use them to pay any state-regulated center- or home-based daycare, which, thanks to underfunding, runs the gamut from decent to worrisome to horrendous.

Florida may offer some of the starkest examples of low-quality care because of the rates providers are paid for subsidized kids, which vary from county to county but are shockingly low throughout the state. In Miami/Dade County, for instance, providers are paid just $1.76 an hour for each subsidized toddler and $2 for an infant. Not surprisingly, there is a severe, chronic shortage of qualified people who have the patience, skills and willingness to work with young children. Denise, Alexandria's mom, is already well aware of the problem. Two years ago, she moved her three older children out of a center where they were getting subsidized care after they complained repeatedly of being hit by a teacher.

Without significant expenditures, childcare can be pretty bad. Even kids in state-subsidized programs are often in lousy care.

The eight babies in cribs at the Discovery Me Pre-School in the Kendall section of Miami are too young to complain, though they make it clear with their tears and outstretched arms that they'd much rather be held or played with than confined to their tiny beds. Discovery Me, located in a large, windowless space behind a mall in Kendall, a suburban community in the southwest part of the city, provides care to fifty-two children. Officially, there should be no more than four infants for every adult. But here there were eight alone with a single caretaker, each whiling away the hours in only a diaper.

Indeed, a few unannounced visits to some of the centers that accept subsidized children in southern Florida revealed that it's not unusual for such absurd numbers of children to be in the care of a lone adult. In the Sunshine State, one childcare provider can legally look after as many as eleven 2-year-olds, fifteen 3-year-olds or twenty 4-year-olds. You might think it'd be impossible to surpass these state-set limits, which are the laxest in the nation. Yet even these ratios are routinely violated.

At the Peter Pan Child Development Center in Pompano Beach, for example, nineteen 3- and 4-year-olds and a school-aged girl were in a small room with an elderly woman in a wheelchair on the afternoon of my visit. Though it's supposed to be nap time, several children have strayed from their sleeping mats. Across a small walkway, another classroom full of children at the center was also understaffed, with two adults overseeing four infants and thirteen 1- and 2-year-olds.

Meanwhile, at Discovery Me, it wasn't just the babies who were having a difficult day. According to Olga Ceballos, the center's director, thirty-eight 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds were in the care of just two adults. Ceballos says one of her teachers had a doctor's appointment on this particular day, leaving the preschool more understaffed than usual.

There is no pool of substitute teachers for Ceballos to draw on—with the piddling pay, it's hard enough to find regular staff. So the director stepped in to look after the children. "There were just so many kids, I had to put the TV on," she says. Afterward the children went into the playground adjoining the parking lot. Being responsible for more than two dozen playing toddlers was so stressful that Ceballos talks about the stint as a physical trauma. "By the time I had to leave for my meeting, I was shaking all over," she says.

Even the best-run centers struggle to find qualified adults to hire. At the A-Plus Early Learning Center, in a small Tudor-style building in the middle of a housing complex in Miami, director Linda Carmona Sánchez struggles to make the work enticing to potential staff. Teachers there and most everywhere in the state receive no health benefits, paid vacation or sick leave. And even though they are subject to fingerprinting and background checks and required to take a forty-five-hour training course and ongoing education, most Florida childcare workers make only the state's minimum wage, $6.67 an hour, which adds up to about $14,000 a year for full-time work. Just across the street from A-Plus, they could easily make more serving up fries at Burger King or McDonald's. Stocking the shelves at the local Wal-Mart pays more, too. Even Sánchez, who has run the center for ten years and works a minimum of sixty hours a week, earns just $17,680 a year.

Some of Florida's childcare woes are its own. The state has relatively high poverty levels. And thirty-two regional networks dole out the federal dollars—as opposed to one state agency—which creates unnecessary administrative costs. But the crisis is also clearly a national one. More than twenty-five states have lowered their eligibility caps. In several, a family of three with an income of $20,000 now earns too much to qualify for subsidies. Others leave their income thresholds higher and simply cap the numbers on waiting lists. Or they put parents on lists but give them a number in the high tens of thousands that would mean their children might finally get subsidized care sometime in their teenage years. And because of the lack of federal funds, childcare providers cut workers' pay; scrimp on books, toys and crayons; and struggle to pay their rent.

Part of what's so frustrating about the nation's childcare mess is that it would be so simple to solve. It would cost $30 billion per year to boost the quality of childcare and also guarantee to help pay for it for everyone with an income below twice the poverty level, according to estimates by Mark Greenberg of the Center for American Progress. That would mean extending benefits to almost 1 million more low-income working families than now get childcare subsidies, since some states now cap

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the eligibility for help just above the poverty line. While Greenberg's plan would mean adding $18 billion to the state and federal money already paying for childcare for low-income families, that's less than 5 percent of what we've already frittered away in Iraq.

Or we could follow in the steps of countries such as France, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden, which provide high-quality universal or near-universal childcare. The United States spends only about $200 on care for every child under 15, according to Janet Gornick, an expert in international social welfare policy. That's one-fifth of per capita spending on childcare in France, where 99 percent of 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds are enrolled in publicly provided care, and one-tenth of that in Sweden and Denmark, where virtually all preschool-age children of working parents can immediately access a spot. In fact, a 1971 bill, the Comprehensive Child Development Act, would have created a universal system in the United States, establishing childcare as a right for all families, regardless of income. The broadly supported legislation was to have established national quality standards and provided money for training of childcare providers and the purchase of facilities. Families making up to about 44 percent of the median income were to have received free care, and those earning up to 74 percent would have been charged on a sliding scale. But, alas, though the bill passed both the House and the Senate, Nixon killed it, delivering a veto speech penned by Pat Buchanan that warned against "communal approaches to childrearing."

Since the bill's 1971 defeat, engineered in part by Phyllis Schlafly, the idea of a comprehensive approach to childcare has been dormant—if not dead—in the United States. Substantially underfunded, what exists of federally subsidized childcare is vulnerable to the conservative criticism that low-quality government services are unworthy of expansion. (As with healthcare, who wants second-rate services for their children, right?) And so the cycle of neglect has continued. Indeed, there has been no increase in federal funding for childcare in six years.

The best hope for improvement in childcare looms on the 2008 horizon. Presidential hopefuls Hillary Clinton, Christopher Dodd and Barack Obama are all members of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, which oversees much of the funding for childcare. And all have paid lip service to the difficulty of affording childcare. In speeches Obama has noted its rising costs. In mid-October, as part of her Agenda for Working Families, Clinton came out with what her press release referred to as a "bold new effort" to provide $200 million in federal funding for training and benefits for childcare workers. While a much-needed first step in drawing attention to the issue, $200 million is far too little to make a significant dent in the nation's childcare crisis. Meanwhile, Dodd, with the least name recognition, has accomplished the most on the issue, having created the Family and Medical Leave Act as well as legislation similar to what Clinton just proposed, which has been knocking around Congress without traction for almost ten years.

Historically, twin arguments have defended public spending on childcare: parents need to work, and children benefit from education before they hit school age. With two-thirds of mothers of young children now employed, the necessity of

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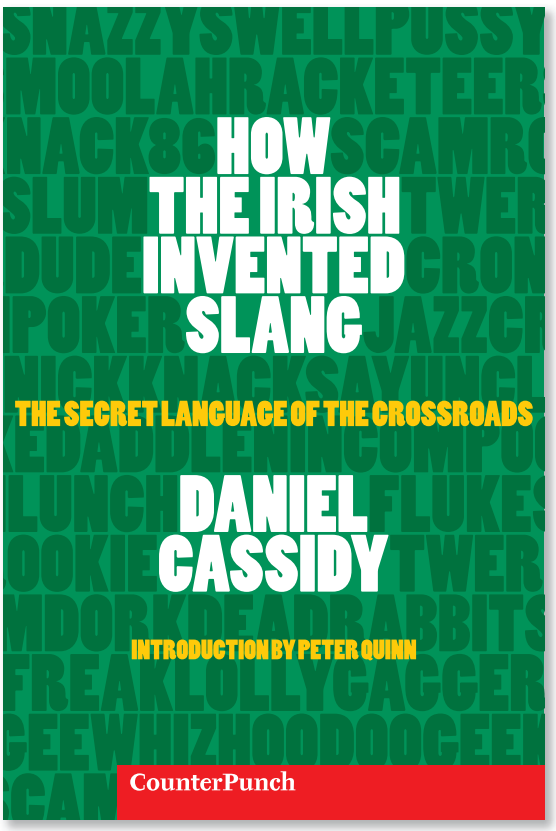

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work has never been clearer. The parents waiting for subsidies in Florida and elsewhere arguably understand the importance of work better than anyone. Were they on welfare, they'd be guaranteed low-cost childcare along with their workfare assignment, at least until the time limits kick in. So by having a low-wage job, they're already fighting a disincentive to find work and subsist on it.

The need for early education is also increasingly obvious. These days, scientists usually explain the importance of teaching young children—rather than just baby-sitting them—by talking about rapid brain growth in the first three years of life, when the critical window for learning is wide open. But there may be no better illustration of the need, or hunger, for developmental help than the children who regularly try to climb the fence surrounding the Irma Hunter Wesley Fort Lauderdale Child Development Center. A one-story building on a run-down stretch of Sistrunk Boulevard in Fort Lauderdale, the center has an unmistakably homey feel. There are several wooden rocking chairs in the nursery and, in the back, a sunny library filled with everything from pop-up to board books. Reading nooks are decorated with stuffed animals and posters. And there's even a tiny couch, where a toddler might curl up to read. But the kids out front, some as young as 5, can't afford to attend the center. And without a safe place to play, they scale the fence daily with the hope of riding on the playground's toy cars and swings.

As it turned out, this fall, little Alexandria—now 17 months old—finally made her way to the top of the list and now receives the coveted reimbursement she and her mother had been awaiting. But there's no sane reason it should have taken almost a year and a half for that to happen. She shouldn't have been dragged along to her mother's work. The kids on Sistrunk Boulevard, still without anything constructive to do, should have a decent place to play. Glabedys should be able to afford food. And the babies at the Discovery Me center should have someone to pick them up. Instead, the children are scrambling to make it over the fence, holding onto the sides of their cribs—and waiting. ■

Hawking War Guilt

The New Republic and the *New York Times Book Review* keep blaming dissenters.

by JIM SLEEPER

One of the most dispiriting causes of the biggest strategic blunder in American history may be the least understood: from the run-up to the Iraq War in 2002 until at least the 2006 elections, it wasn't the Rush Limbaughs and Ann Coulters who stampeded the chattering classes and liberal audiences toward our still-unfolding disaster. It was the "best" thinkers, writing in the *New York Times Book Review* and *The New Republic*, who cued the orchestra of high-minded opinion to play a medley of half-truths and hosannas in support of the war.

There had been nothing like it since John Dewey and *The New Republic* supported America's entry into World War I to "make the world safe for democracy"—a liberal intervention that won militarily but unleashed humanity's darkest disasters. The Iraq venture, too, has been backed by Wilsonian "tough liberals" fighting a "good fight" for democracy. Now they're trying to shift the burden of responsibility to dissenters, whom the war hawks marginalized so fully that they relieved them of any responsibility at all.

Before the first shot in the Iraq War was fired, its intellectual supporters—*Times Book Review* editor Sam Tanenhaus, *New Republic* editor Peter Beinart and literary editor Leon Wieseltier; and writers Paul Berman, Richard Brookhiser, David Brooks, Christopher Hitchens, Michael Ignatieff, Joe Klein, George Packer and Jacob Weisberg—struck preemptively at many who foresaw reruns of the Vietnam War's trumped-up pretexts, overkill and quagmires.

The Iraq War would be different, its enthusiasts insisted, invoking the cautionary specter of Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler in 1938 but never the equally ill-fated liberal war fevers of 1914. By the time Paul Bremer had to be spirited secretly out of the Green Zone, no antiwar movement or Congress had forced the United States to "fight with one hand tied behind our back," as Vietnam warriors had charged. No Jane Fonda had visited a Middle Eastern Hanoi to aid and comfort the enemy. The Iraq War's masterminds and cheerleaders had done all that themselves. (*Weekly Standard* editor William Kristol, for example, claimed the war's aftermath would require only 75,000 US troops and $16 billion a year, and he accused dissenters of harming the democracy crusade, even after Abu Ghraib guards, not war critics, had demoralized the effort.)

Yet intellectual hawks' assaults on leftists and liberals intensified in the *Times Book Review* and *The New Republic*. It was easy enough to condemn protesters who consider Islamist terrorists just anti-imperialists in a hurry and who ignore Norman Thomas's admonition not to burn the American flag but to wash it. But even the silliest protests were reactive, not causal, to the storm of intimidation and lies.

As storm damage rose, the *Times*'s Tanenhaus published a steady stream of put-downs of dissenters. Some critics were simply ignored: Al Gore's *The Assault on Reason* wasn't reviewed; nor was former Harvard College dean Harry Lewis's *Excellence Without a Soul*, which argues that liberal education at Lawrence Summers's Harvard was compromised by too much money,

Jim Sleeper, a lecturer in political science at Yale University, is the author of The Closest of Strangers *and* Liberal Racism.

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power and public relations. Others received prissy put-downs, as has *Times* columnist and economist Paul Krugman's *The Conscience of a Liberal* in the October 21 *Book Review*. His *The Great Unraveling*, too, got condescending treatment, from Peter Beinart, in May 2003. Not all reviews of "political" books were unfair. But more typically we've had Berman sneering at Francis Fukuyama's apostasy from neoconservatism, Brooks lampooning an academic psychologist for urging Democrats to get tough, Klein coronating Beinart's term-paperish *The Good Fight*, Henry Kissinger coronating himself in a review about Dean Acheson and Brookhiser ruling that Hendrik Hertzberg's time had passed.

Some of the reviews staged anthropologically perfect re-enactments of the Salem witch trials, which enlisted prominent opinion-makers of their time to identify scapegoats for a community's sins and fears. The intellectual hawks, displacing their own terrors onto the left, fell into the arms of a dysfunctional militarism, without, of course, ever bearing arms themselves or, in most cases, even visiting Iraq.

Beinart greeted Krugman's *The Great Unraveling* in the *Book Review* by announcing that "most Americans do not consider the Bush Administration corrupt, and Paul Krugman cannot convincingly prove it is." Even when Beinart admitted, in *The Good Fight*, that he'd been wrong about the war, he leapt to cast Michael Moore as a greater danger to the Republic than Karl Rove. Tanenhaus assigned Beinart's book to the peripatetic journalist Klein, once a biographer of Woody Guthrie, later a scourge of the left, now *Time* magazine's apostle of civic virtue.

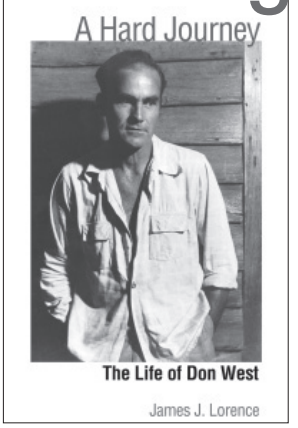
As Iraq fell apart, the *Book Review* became a neoconservative damage-control gazette, where Beinart atoned by hustling the embarrassing Norman Podhoretz's *World War IV* offstage. His sniffing that Podhoretz writes as if "dodging I.E.D.'s on his way to Zabar's" only highlighted the smallness of their differences.

No less embarrassing was the sophistical David Brooks, sometimes mentioned as liberals' favorite conservative. Writing for a Yale student publication in 2002, he'd chided those who feared that "if we try to champion democracy in Iraq we will only screw it up." Two years later, as we did screw it up, Brooks was writing, "Come on people, let's get a grip." By 2006 he was urging Americans to meet "savagery" with savagery in Iraq, where insurgents "create an environment in which it is difficult to survive if you are decent." His scapegoats included supporters of Ned Lamont's Senate race in Connecticut against Joe Lieberman—nihilists who "tell themselves that their enemies are so vicious they have to be vicious too." In August, in a review for Tanenhaus of Drew Westen's *The Political Brain*, Brooks lampooned liberal academics as would-be coup plotters.

Paul Berman, reviewing for Tanenhaus the ex–war hawk Francis Fukuyama's second thoughts about neoconservatism, succumbed to his own obsessions with war critics. Trying to distinguish between Fukuyama's neo-Wilsonianism and his own finer visions of apocalyptic struggle, Berman became diverted by his detractors: "*The Nation* has become *The Weekly Purge*," he complained, meaning that it was holding the war's deep thinkers accountable for its costs.

Berman is now shuttling in and out of the *Times Book Review* and Wieseltier's literary section of *The New Republic*, which has become a halfway house for penitent hawks. Too full of himself for penitence, Berman devoted 28,000 words there last spring

Freeing Speech



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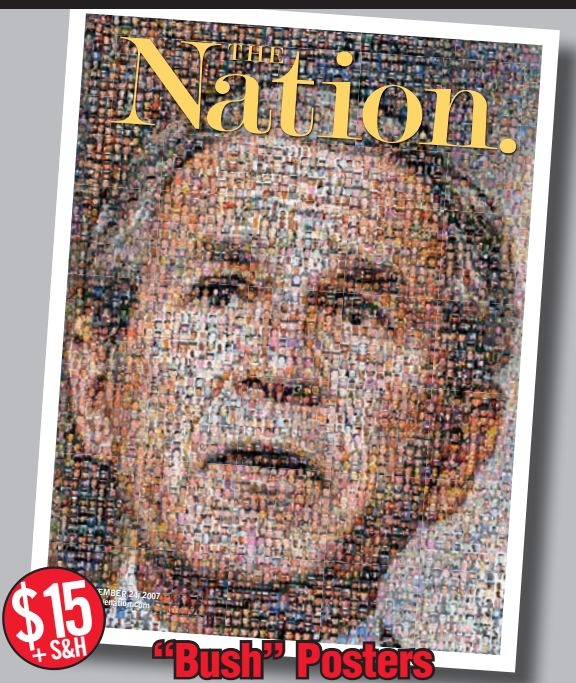

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to the insidious Islamo-fascism in Western common rooms, with a snide aside about a supposed enabler, *New York Review of Books* contributor Ian Buruma. Berman attacked in his familiar faux-French, faux-simple style, an intellectual's equivalent of "What part of that sentence don't you understand?"

That only recalled Wieseltier's own diatribe of August 2004, in Tanenhaus's *Times Book Review*, against a novel by Nicholson Baker about a man who wants to kill President Bush because of the war. Wieseltier departed from the novel to excoriate liberals for demonizing Bush; he didn't mention a letter to Bush he'd signed with forty neoconservatives in 2001 urging that "the eradication of terrorism and its sponsors must include a determined effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq."

The New Republic recently published two pained elegies to American conservatism by Tanenhaus. In one, Tanenhaus insinuates himself retroactively into William F. Buckley Jr.'s early war skepticism. In another, he decides that anti-Communist crusader Whittaker Chambers escaped the "haunted air" of ideological certitude in his later years and would have dismissed Bush's Manichaean zeal "with the sly half-smile of a melancholy man who knows better."

Like other penitents, though, Tanenhaus still can't resist a little left-bashing. Quoting George Orwell's observation that English intellectuals' attraction to Stalinism "betrayed 'a secret wish…[to] usher in a hierarchical society where the intellectual can at last get his hands on the whip," Tanenhaus instructs readers that "It is no less true today. The intellectual left, most conspicuously in its Ivy League, Manhattan, and Hollywood variants, still clings to its dream of the whip handle, just as the educated right dreams of the day when the intelligentsia will be the first to feel the stinging cord." That closing gesture toward balance ("the educated right") seems only a fig leaf for a hawkish lust to catch leftists dreaming of whips.

Writers who consume themselves this way resemble George Santayana's fanatic, who redoubles his energy when he has forgotten his aim—and forgets that it is he, not his opponents, who lost the war. But to gloat would be to risk stumbling into the hawks' abyss. It would be better to urge Tanenhaus, Wieseltier et al. to rediscover Eugene V. Debs and Martin Luther King Jr., who understood that civic-republican crusades and rebellions are best when grounded in affirmations of civic trust that require a canny strength to sustain. Debs, King, Gandhi and Eastern European dissidents learned how to extend trust in ways that elicit it, even in the teeth of violent oppression. Why can't our war hawks learn it in New York and Washington?

Left and liberal wrongs acknowledged, the deeper danger now is American conservatism's inability to reconcile its keening for a sacred, ordered liberty with its obeisance to every whim of capital. Why keep blaming the consequences on enemies abroad and traitors at home or indulging a Grand Inquisitor's ritualized submission to whatever the national-security and corporate-consumer juggernauts are insinuating into our lives? Only someone denying the real dangers would give as much credibility and cachet as Tanenhaus and Wieseltier have to writers who can't stop blaming a "hate-America" left. ■

Exchange

(continued from page 2)

Kors Replies

New York City

My thanks to Dr. Lichtman for his thoughtful letter.

For five months I asked Surgeon General Pollock to speak with me about the personality disorder scandal. Each interview request was denied. ABC's Bob Woodruff asked Pollock to join him on camera. She refused. Congressman Bob Filner called her to testify before Congress. She declined. Now comes her letter to the editor.

No doubt readers will find it strange that she promises to reveal "numerous inaccuracies," then ends her letter without having pointed out one.

Pollock is right that the Army Board has the power to overturn personality disorder cases. It's a power they rarely employ. Of the dozens of cases I examined, only one had his discharge overturned: William Wooldridge, who battled the military for twenty-four months and benefited from extensive behind-the-scenes work by his high-ranking Washington contacts.

Anyone familiar with Army discharges will recognize the specious logic of Pollock's point (b): soldiers who merely have personality disorder traits—say, nervousness or depression—aren't discharged from the Army. They see a counselor and are returned to their unit. An army in need of soldiers to wage two simultaneous wars does not dismiss troops who can still perform their duties. Only when a soldier grows so ill that he can no longer do his job is he dismissed—and then a medical board discharge is required by Army regulations.

In point (d) Pollock confirms that the four-year review of Fort Carson's personality disorder discharges, trumpeted in her Tallman memo, never occurred. As she reminds us, Army officials did say that they examined fifty-two personality disorder cases (the soldiers who had also been diagnosed with PTSD and whose records had not been lost by Fort Carson officials). But the Army eventually admitted that the other 220 cases were not examined. Those included soldiers who returned from Iraq with brain damage and those who could not persuade their doctors to diagnose PTSD.

The Army's contention that a "thoughtful and thorough" review can be performed without examining or even speaking to soldiers—point (f)—I discussed twice in my *Nation* articles. Readers will recall Col. Steven Knorr, the man Pollock selected to lead the personality disorder review, stating that soldiers are not trained to recognize personality disorder, so speaking to them would be of limited value. Cynthia Vaughan, Pollock's official spokeswoman, explained that Pollock didn't talk to soldiers because soldiers' input on their own cases does not hold "medical validity."

Soldiers will be happy to hear Pollock's assertion that her office also reviewed the personality disorder cases examined by Cololnel Knorr, though most, I imagine, won't be too satisfied to learn of another anonymous reviewer who examined paperwork without speaking to soldiers and, like Knorr, concluded that Purple Heart–earning Specialist Town was not wounded in combat.

Joshua Kors

East Is East & West Is West

In "Rudy's Bird of Prey" [Oct. 29] we characterized Paul Singer as an Upper East Side billionaire. He resides on the Upper West Side.

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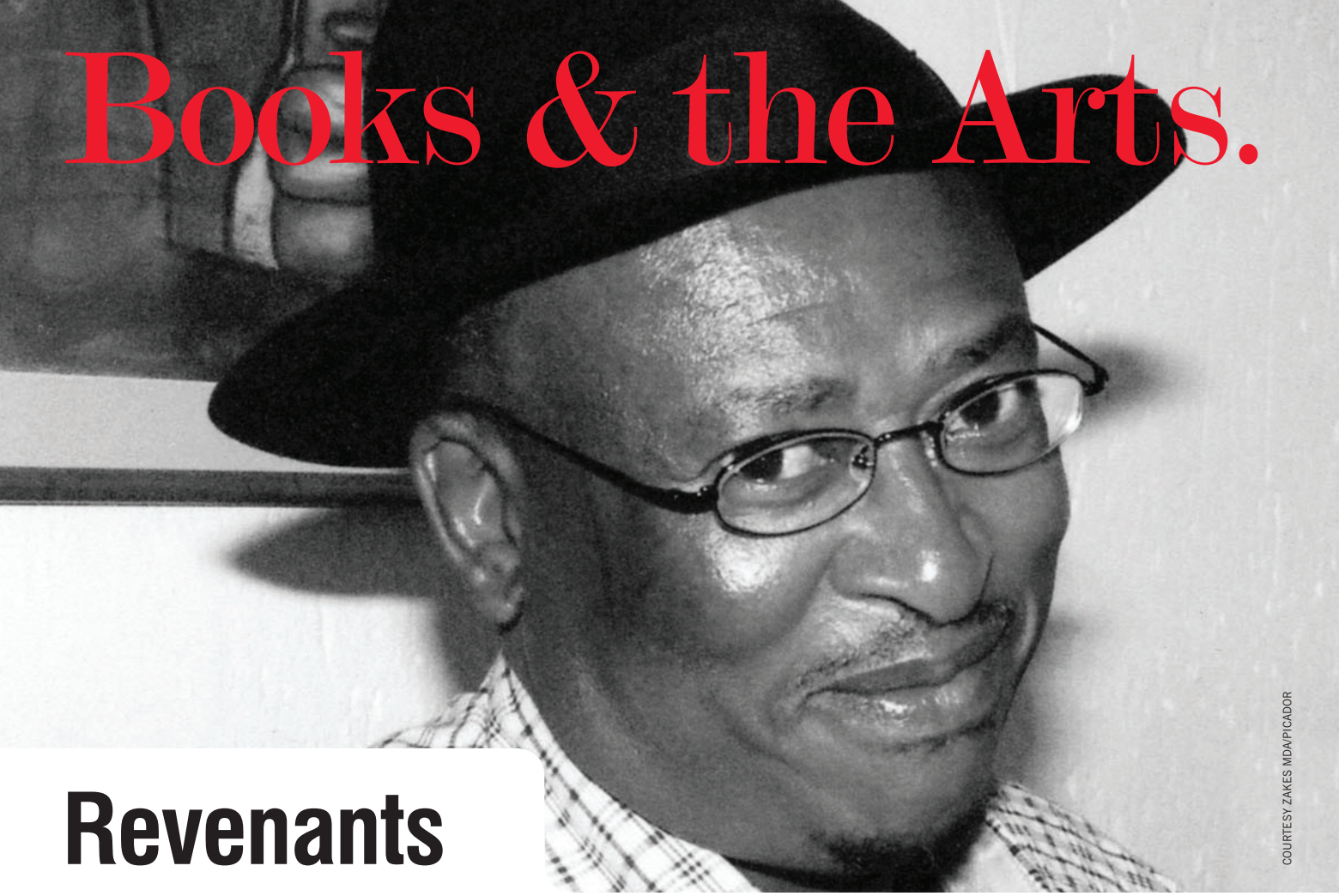

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Revenants

by LAILA LALAMI

Over his long and prolific career, South African writer Zakes Mda has produced plays, novels and stories that explore very different characters, eras and landscapes. In *Ways of Dying*, two childhood friends from a small village in South Africa reconnect decades later in an unnamed city, their relationship fulfilled only when they reconcile with their painful past. In *The Heart of Redness*, villagers in the Eastern Cape fight over whether to celebrate or denigrate the legacy of a nineteenth-century teenager who prophesied that if the Xhosa people killed their cattle and burned their crops, the ancestors would be resurrected to defeat the British colonizers. *The Madonna of Excelsior* chronicles the coming of age of a South African woman whose mother and father were tried in 1971 under the Immorality Act for having interracial sex. Mda's latest book, *Cion*, is set in a small town in Ohio that once provided refuge for runaway slaves. It features a cast of characters who struggle with how to fit this important historical fact into their lives, their relationships and even their art. The connecting thread in all these novels seems to be the unresolved presence of the past. It hovers like a ghost, at once forbidding and inviting, seductive and terrifying, depressing and inspiring.

Mda is deeply concerned with how people remember the past, how they use it to shape the present, how they call upon it to fashion modern selves, modern identities—and how in the process they run the risk of exploiting or sentimentalizing it. Given Mda's life story, which is marked by all the major events of his country, one can see why he has such a keen interest in history. Born Zanemvula Kizito Gatyeni ("The One Who Brings Rain") Mda in 1948 in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, Zakes Mda spent his childhood in Soweto, the township just southwest of Johannesburg that would later become the locus of popular resistance against the apartheid regime. His father was president of the ANC Youth League, and in this capacity he met regularly with fellow founders Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo. (At one point, the young Mda lived in Mandela's home.) When Mda was 15, his father went into exile in Lesotho to avoid the risk of being imprisoned. Mda joined him there two years later, then left Lesotho to study theater and communications in Ohio and Cape Town. During the long years of apartheid, he lived outside South Africa but produced a great number of plays (thirty-two in all) that dramatized the struggle for equality. Among these were *We Shall Sing for the Fatherland* and *The Hill*, both of which won him awards. In 1995, just a year after the country held its first democratic elections, Mda published his first novel, the critically acclaimed *Ways of Dying*. Four other novels, all set in South Africa, were to follow. *Cion* is set in Ohio—where Mda lives for part of the year and where he is a professor of creative writing at Ohio University—and thus marks a departure for him.

In *Cion* Toloki, a self-styled itinerant professional mourner from South Africa (calling himself an "angel of death," he wails and moans at funerals in exchange for payment), arrives in the college town of Athens, Ohio, on Halloween night in 2004. At a street

Cion.
By Zakes Mda.
Picador. 312 pp. Paper $14.

Ways of Dying.
By Zakes Mda.
Picador. 212 pp. Paper $13.

Laila Lalami, the author of Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits, *is an assistant professor of creative writing at the University of California, Riverside.*

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party, he meets a young man named Obed Quigley, who is later arrested for breaking into a sorority house and impersonating Nicodemus, a slave who was murdered during his escape along the Underground Railroad and whose ghost is known to haunt the house's basement. While the case is investigated, Toloki moves in with Obed's family in the nearby town of Kilvert, renting a room from them. Toloki meets and befriends Obed's mother, Ruth, a passionate supporter of George W. Bush (she says that "he got his messages direct from God" and that "he gives lotsa money to Africa"). Toloki also meets Obed's brooding and taciturn father, Mahlon Quigley, who occupies himself by cultivating gnomes in his garden, because gnomes, unlike plants, will not die. And then there is Obed's sister, Orpah, who, though in her 40s, spends days locked in her bedroom sketching childlike drawings and playing a sitar she bought on credit from an Indian woman. Ruth is the family's sole breadwinner; she makes traditional quilts that she sells at the market, although these days customers prefer more whimsical designs and Ruth rarely manages to make any sales. Toloki becomes intensely interested in quilting and especially Ruth's claim that the quilts were used to escape slavery.

This setup allows for a journey into the past, and the reader is transported, in alternating chapters, to nineteenth-century Virginia. There, we meet the Quigleys' ancestor, a woman known as the Abyssinian Queen, "even though none of her forebears ever set foot in Abyssinia." The Queen is a house slave for David Fairfield, who runs a slave-breeding farm. The abolition of the foreign slave trade in 1818 resulted in higher prices for slaves, making them "a more profitable crop than tobacco or cotton or corn," and Fairfield is determined to make as much money from the slaves as he can.

In order to raise the value of his "property," he also employs indentured workers—white girls, mostly Irish, whose papers have been falsified to show that they have some black blood—in the production of the highly prized mulatto slaves. The Abyssinian Queen has a child by Fairfield, whom she names Abednego, but she falls out of favor when she refuses to be married off to a slave on another plantation and, furthermore, is found to be pregnant by a field slave. She is beaten and moved to the cabins, where her task is to sew clothes for the slave community. She begins to make quilts, whose designs carry secret messages. It was "beauty that spoke a silent language." When her second child, Nicodemus, is born, she arranges for him to meet and get to know his older brother, Abednego. The Queen tells her children stories every night, especially tales about the Promised Land. Eventually, Nicodemus and Abednego escape along the Underground Railroad, relying on the quilt and a sampler their mother made for them in order to orient themselves. Like other escaped slaves from Virginia, Abednego finds refuge with an Indian tribe and Irish immigrants in Tabler Town, in southeastern Ohio. Over the next 150 years, their descendants intermarry, creating a multiracial community now known as WIN (White, Indian, Negro) or, more academically, "tri-racial isolates."

In *Cion*, the main characters' sense of the past is almost entirely nostalgic and evasive.

In form and structure, *Cion* bears striking similarities to Mda's earlier novels. It interweaves a modern story with an older one, the latter based on a little-remembered historical fact, which is then laced with a good dose of magic realism. Although the characters of the Abyssinian Queen, Abednego and Nicodemus are fictional, it appears there really was a slave named Nicodemus who escaped to Ohio and was murdered in the basement of what is now an Ohio University sorority house (Alpha Omicron Pi, for the curious). The paths Nicodemus and Abednego follow, and the multiracial community they help establish in Kilvert, are very real. At the same time, there is a fantastical element at play, as when the Abyssinian Queen metamorphoses into characters from the stories she tells the children at night—turning into a hawk or a spider—or when a blue fly appears to Nicodemus and Abednego at different milestones on their flight to freedom, guides them and reports back to the Abyssinian Queen.

Mda uses the two stories, old and new, to highlight the fraught relationship his characters have with the past. Obed wants to reconnect with his Native American ancestry, but not out of a desire to learn more about his heritage and his identity. Rather, he wants to be able to cash in on the casino money that will come his way if he can prove he is Shawnee. His mother tells him that their ancestor Harry Corbett was in fact Cherokee, but Obed is undeterred. He takes up hand-trembling, hoping to foretell the future and make a lot of money in the process, until someone points out to him that the practice is a "Navajo thing." On yet another occasion, he tries to revive mystical African traditions, which Toloki does not recognize:

> I have observed that people of African descent in America often create African heritages that no one in Africa knows about. There are some who are descendants of kings and queens who existed only in the collective imagination of their oppressed progenitors. I also know that there are many rituals and traditions long dead on the mother continent, that were preserved and transformed and enriched by the slaves to suit their new lives in America. I therefore cannot claim that just because I have no idea of Obed's mysticisms that they are not drawn from practices that once existed in Africa.

Mahlon has his own vexing issues with the past. Mahlon's mother, a white woman, was sent to a mental asylum in the 1940s when she was found to be pregnant by a black man. She died shortly after delivering her baby, and Mahlon does not know where exactly she is interred, so he cannot properly mourn on her tomb. Instead, he spends his days taking care of his garden full of gnomes, until Toloki endeavors to help him locate the grave and offers his services as a professional mourner. The moody Orpah wants to make quilts that are wholly her own and does not want to use the traditional patterns Ruth so painstakingly recreates. Ruth, on the other hand, refuses to modernize her work or even to use newer tools like rotary cutters. For Ruth the past must be respected and followed wholesale, even in politics. She votes for Bush in the 2004 election because "the GOP freed them slaves!"

It's quite clear in *Cion* that the main characters' relationships with the past are almost entirely nostalgic and evasive. For instance, Obed wants to exploit the past for monetary gain, though it proves somewhat recalcitrant. Mahlon seeks to neutralize the past by cultivating gnomes, which do not run any risk of dying or being taken away from him. Orpah prefers to forget the past altogether and create art that bears no relationship to her heritage. Ruth clings to the political past of the Republican Party because of its role in emancipation, yet she refuses to recognize that modern Republican policies have been harmful to her community and to minorities in general. The characters in *Cion* find redemption only

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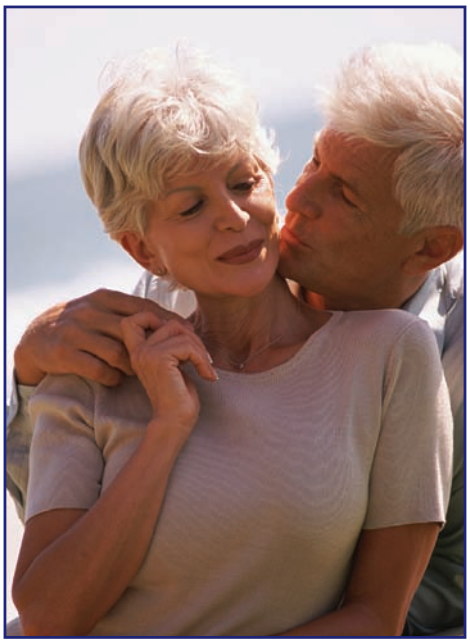

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when they reconcile with the complexity of the past: learning about it, understanding it and dynamically interpreting it to create one part (certainly not all parts) of their present selves. Toloki plays a role in all of this by encouraging the characters to have both a sentimental and intellectual relationship with their history.

As a work of fiction, *Cion* itself bears a strong connection to the past—to Mda's first novel. The character of Toloki previously appeared in *Ways of Dying*, a melancholy, mesmerizing tale set in South Africa in the last years of apartheid. On Christmas Day, Toloki runs into Noria, an old village acquaintance, as she is on her way to bury her son, the victim of violence perpetrated by antiapartheid revolutionaries. Over the next few days, Toloki reminisces about his past; his abusive artisan father, Jwara; his friendship with Noria; the strange and possibly predatory relationship between Jwara and Noria; and all the events that came to shape Toloki's life. With few opportunities available to him in his village, Toloki leaves for "the city" (perhaps Johannesburg), where he hopes to find work with a friend of his father's, the carpenter Nefolovhodwe. The man made a fortune after inventing the Nefolovhodwe Collapsible Coffin, which can be "carried by one person, like a suitcase, and it could be put together in easy steps even by a child."

Observing that "Nefolovhodwe had attained all his wealth through death," Toloki decides that he should have a similar occupation. He does not have any practical skills, but he is known to have "the saddest eyes," hence his decision to offer his services to families. Toloki's work gives him an intimate knowledge of ways of dying in South Africa: a boy is shot by unnamed revolutionaries, a laborer is burned alive by a white colleague, a child is killed and eaten by wild dogs, five people are murdered after a dispute with a shopkeeper over chicken pieces, a patriarch is killed by his two sons after allowing his mistress's children to shave first in preparation for a funeral. "Our ways of dying are our ways of living," he observes.

Toloki's move to Ohio is explained in *Cion*'s opening page: "The sciolist has delusions of Godness." The sciolist in question is, of course, Zakes Mda himself, who jumps at the idea, suggested by Sam Crowl, his colleague at Ohio University, to transplant Toloki to another culture. Toloki, who is creating his own story, describes Mda as having "a belly that hangs out like an apron" and tries to avoid the author at all times, except at crucial points in the story, when the plot warrants a move that Toloki cannot bring about. Explaining his reasons for accepting the move to the United States, Toloki says that although death was plentiful in South Africa, "it lacked the drama of the violent deaths that I used to mourn during the upheavals of the political transition in that country." Despite talk of the AIDS pandemic "stalking the homesteads," Toloki says he spends most of his time mourning deaths caused by "diseases that never used to kill anyone before—diseases such as TB and pneumonia that used to be cured with ease not so long ago."

Mda, like any novelist, is under no obligation to talk about every single issue facing his society.

The mention of AIDS here is particularly interesting. In January 2003, the novelist and critic Norman Rush wrote a scathing piece in *The New York Review of Books* in which he accused Mda of committing a sin of omission by not mentioning AIDS in *Ways of Dying* or *The Heart of Redness*. Toloki's statement in *Cion* may well be a pointed answer to Rush's criticism. In any case, it's very difficult to understand why Mda should be singled out and accused of silence on AIDS. After all, Mda's compatriot J.M. Coetzee had not written about AIDS in his fiction at the time that Rush's article appeared, and yet Rush did not find it relevant to talk about a "sin of omission" in Coetzee's work. A novelist is under no obligation to talk about every single issue facing his society, or those that have greater resonance in the West. South Africa has the highest rate of rape in the world. Should one accuse Mda of a sin of omission for not writing a novel about rape, too?

Cion stands out from *Ways of Dying* in one notable way, however. In *Ways of Dying*, Mda uses the first-person plural point of view, adapting and extending the oral storytelling tradition of South Africa:

> It is not different, really, here in the city. Just like back in the village, we live our lives together as one. We know everything about everybody. We even know things that happen when we are not there; things that happen behind people's closed doors deep in the middle of the night. We are the all-seeing eye of the village gossip. When in our orature the storyteller begins the story, 'They say it once happened…' we are the 'they'. No individual owns any story. The community is the owner of the story, and it can tell it the way it deems it fit. We would not be needing to justify the communal voice that tells this story if you had not wondered how we became so omniscient in the affairs of Toloki and Noria.

But in *Cion*, Toloki takes matters into his own hands, wrestling the storytelling mantle from the community and the novelist and speaking for himself. The oral tradition is still present in *Cion*, though, as in all Mda's work. It can be seen in the stories the Abyssinian Queen tells the children at night, to the chagrin of Mrs. Fairfield, who complains that they are "voodoo stories."

Although *Cion* is an engaging novel, it suffers from occasional didactic lapses. Mda's fascination with history and politics directs the story, and the characters struggle to find their own motivation, their own psychological life. When Orpah does not appear at dinner or play the sitar, Toloki comments that "the silence leaves a hole in me. Don't ask me why." Exploring the reasons is precisely what the story should do. In addition, Toloki is at once befuddled by Halloween celebrations and savvy enough to arrange for legal mediation between Obed and the sorority girl he fondled. Such inconsistencies make for an occasionally jarring narrative, in which Toloki does not so much act out of his own volition as service the plot. By contrast, the characters and story line set in nineteenth-century Virginia are much more fully realized, and one can only speculate that it might be because Mda is more interested in the historical story he wove than in the modern one.

Throughout his work, Mda has explored the appeal and the danger of constructing a modern self that is untethered to history and tradition. The cion of the title could be Toloki, who has been transplanted to America to become an itinerant mourner; but a more likely interpretation is that it refers to the African-American community, cut off from one continent and grafted onto another. Learning about its roots, Mda seems to say, is the community's only chance at the success and prosperity that everyone, from evangelists to politicians, seems fond of promising. ■

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Albert Shanker addresses teachers during the 1968 Ocean Hill-Brownsville strike.

Shanker Blows Up the World

by THOMAS J. SUGRUE

WHITE ETHNIC NEW YORK
Jews, Catholics, and the Shaping of Postwar Politics.
By Joshua M. Zeitz.
North Carolina. 278 pp. $24.95.

TOUGH LIBERAL
Albert Shanker and the Battles Over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy.
By Richard D. Kahlenberg.
Columbia. 524 pp. $29.95.

By the early 1990s, it had become axiomatic among mainstream Democratic pundits and politicians that liberalism had collapsed as the result of the supposed excesses of the 1960s. A slew of influential pundits—among them Jim Sleeper, Stanley Greenberg, Fred Siegel and Thomas and Mary Edsall, along with others who found themselves in the orbit of Bill Clinton—looked back wistfully to the days when the Democrats held electoral majorities by fashioning a big-tent politics that included working-class Catholics and Jews, blacks, Southern whites and even establishment intellectuals. In their telling, so oft-repeated that it became conventional wisdom, the big tent's ropes and stays began to give way in the mid-1960s. Democrats, the story goes, alienated their core voters—white working-class men—by pandering to race-conscious minorities, defending the out-of-control welfare state that enabled them and giving the reins of power to so-called "limousine liberals" who condescended to blue-collar whites and forced an agenda of acid, amnesty, abortion, gay rights and multiculturalism to the center of Democratic Party politics.

Like all jeremiads—calls for redemption in the form of narratives of decline—the story of the unraveling of liberalism contained within it the prescription for a Democratic revival. A new breed of Democratic operatives set their sights on a small band of the electorate—the so-called Reagan Democrats and their latter-day descendants, NASCAR dads. Winning back these defectors required a new manly, nationalistic liberalism, one that offered "tough love" toward the indigent, weaned the poor from welfare "dependency" and reinvigorated the Democratic Party's commitment to the "traditional values" of hard work and self-discipline. Above all, it required the rejection of "identity politics" and its pernicious spawn—affirmative action, minority set-asides, bilingual education and multiculturalism. In this zero-sum approach to politics, any program that benefited minorities was inherently suspect: aid to cities alienated suburbanites; racial "quotas" took jobs and admissions slots from deserving whites and gave them to undeserving minorities; weak-kneed liberals squandered hard-earned tax dollars to subsidize illegitimate mothers, coddle criminals and engage in social engineering like "forced busing" to desegregate schools.

And like all jeremiads, the new Democratic orthodoxy evoked a wholly fictitious American past. The Democrats needed to turn the clock back to the antediluvian moment—that is, before 1968—and restore the economic opportunity, colorblindness, family values, law and order, and personal responsibility that supposedly reigned before hippies, rioters, anti-American activists and multiculturalists took over. In so doing they tapped an unacknowledged white-identity politics, one that celebrated such virtues as discipline and self-sufficiency while ignoring the fact that for most of the twentieth cen-

Thomas J. Sugrue, Kahn Professor of History and Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, has just finished Sweet Land of Liberty: The Unfinished Struggle for Racial Equality in the North *(forthcoming from Random House).*

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tury, whites were the prime beneficiaries of government largesse—supposedly universalistic government programs like Social Security, the GI Bill and federal homeownership initiatives, which systematically excluded minorities for much of their history.

Over the past decade, a whole generation of historians and political scientists have systematically dismantled the myth of a liberal consensus. The notion that there was a Democratic "big tent" that included Southern whites, Northern urban ethnics and black workers has come apart in a slew of case studies of grassroots politics in the post–New Deal years. Political scientists like Rogers Smith, Philip Klinkner and Ira Katznelson, and historians (I count myself among them) such as Arnold Hirsch, Robert Self, David Freund and Kim Phillips-Fein have found that antiliberalism was deeply rooted, even among nominal Democrats in the supposed heyday of the New Deal order. Whites—both Northern and Southern—punished Democratic officials who were too "pro-Negro" well before the civil rights and black power struggles of the 1960s. White suburbanites long embraced the antitax politics that would be a defining issue for the right. And anticommunist politics drove many voters away from pink-tainted liberals toward the right.

New York's liberal coalition was arguably the strongest in the country, but as Joshua Zeitz shows in *White Ethnic New York*, his fine new book on Catholic and Jewish politics in New York City, that coalition was fragile, even in its postwar heyday. Jews, blacks and Puerto Ricans filled the city's big tent, but New York's archetypal Democrats, the city's blue-collar and lower-middle-class Italian and Irish Catholics, were not very comfortable in their company. Drawing on obscure Catholic and Jewish newspapers, tracts and correspondence with elected officials, Zeitz shows that even before the tumult of the 1960s, white Catholics were at best weakly attached to liberalism. Urban Catholics fretted that the Democrats were soft on communism. They were suspicious of Jews as freethinking and prone to socialism. During the '50s they were attracted to Republicans, especially Joseph McCarthy. Catholics fretted about the erosion of traditional authority and morality and found themselves repelled by the haughty liberalism of establishment figures like Adlai Stevenson. Even those Catholic voters motivated by bread-and-butter labor and economic issues, Zeitz shows, often pulled the lever for Republicans. In New York, as in other Democratic strongholds like Detroit, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Chicago, white voters were fickle supporters of liberalism. They were fragmented, often racist and more than primed to vote Republican, especially on matters of culture, morality and foreign policy.

One figure who fleets across Zeitz's pages—and who is the subject of *Tough Liberal*, a full-length biography by Richard Kahlenberg—is teacher unionist Albert Shanker, who died in 1997. Shanker is no longer a household name. But he was for a time in the late 1960s and early '70s—at least in New York. The lead character in Woody Allen's 1973 hit *Sleeper* wakes up from his 200-year slumber to discover that civilization was destroyed when "a man by the name of Albert Shanker got hold of a nuclear warhead." Shanker, a lifelong socialist, leader of the American Federation of Teachers, political gadfly and tireless educational reformer, seemed an unlikely agent of apocalypse. But *Sleeper*'s laugh line contained more than a little radioactive truth. The man named Albert Shanker did not drop the bomb on liberalism. But he was no small part of a political and intellectual Manhattan Project that exploited the fractures of New Deal and Great Society liberalism and empowered the New Right to rebuild from the rubble.

Kahlenberg pines for a Shankerist political order. If only the Democrats had listened to Shanker. If only they had adopted a "tough liberalism" that jettisoned pesky identity politics for the neat politics of class interest; if only they had embraced meritocracy rather than harmful racial "quotas"; if only they had stood up to the dual menaces of communism abroad and rampant crime at home; if only they had rewarded merit and hard work rather than capitulating to the fashions of multiculturalism and "extreme bilingual education," then they could have thwarted the Republican juggernaut.

Much about Shanker's career is admirable—his unstinting commitment to unionism, his dedication to the principle of public education and his sympathy for the downtrodden. Shanker deserves credit for his role in the expansion of public-sector unionism and particularly for his successful efforts to expand the umbrella of teachers' union protections to mostly minority, poorly compensated and often badly treated teachers' aides. But in his rush to canonize Shanker as the visionary who could have saved the Democrats from themselves, Kahlenberg all too often sacrifices critical distance for hagiography. Halfway into his public career, which lasted more than four decades, Shanker had often discredited liberalism in the name of saving it. Shanker was no bystander in the rise of market populism, social conservatism

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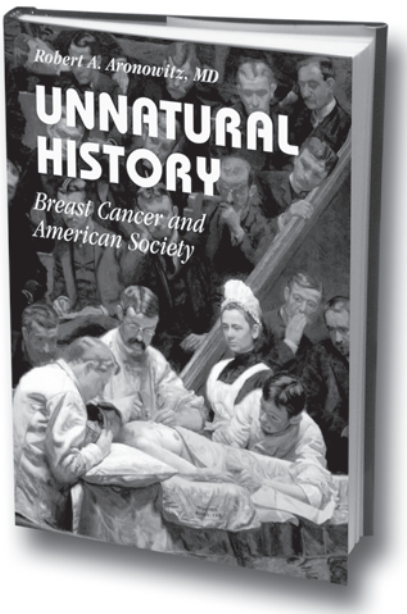

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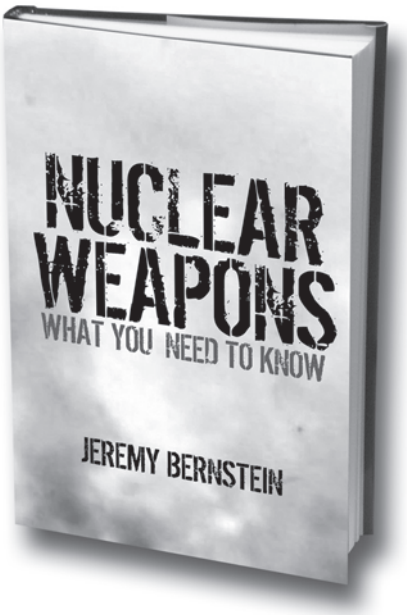

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– Walter Isaacson, President of the Aspen Institute and author of *Einstein: His Life and Universe* (2007)

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and neo-imperialism. He was present at liberalism's destruction.

Albert Shanker came of age in a distinctive political and social milieu—one that profoundly shaped his career. Born in 1928 to working-class Jewish immigrants, he grew up in rough-and-tumble, mostly Catholic Long Island City. His Queens neighborhood was a tough place to be an awkward, bookish Jewish boy. Shanker suffered the slings and arrows of everyday anti-Semitism. He was ostracized and regularly beaten up by his non-Jewish classmates; and he attended a school where one teacher offered encomiums to Hitler and where others mocked his Jewish identity. Shanker was wounded by the deep political and cultural divisions between Catholics and Jews that Zeitz documents so well. But like many New York Jews during the first half of the twentieth century, Shanker also came of age in a place where socialists really did see themselves as the left wing of the possible and often allied with Democrats, even if the party of FDR and Truman was a little too far to the right for their taste. The young Shanker found his calling in the tracts of socialist intellectuals and found it reinforced in the circles of young idealists who gathered around sectarian gurus like Max Shachtman. For the rest of his life, Shanker believed in speaking his mind, regardless of the cost; he embraced the values of freethinking, hard work and merit. And he never wholly jettisoned his socialism.

By the time he was in his 20s—having grown disillusioned with graduate study in philosophy—Shanker followed the time-honored path of well-educated New York Jews, who still faced barriers in the professions. He became a schoolteacher in a district whose teaching staff was disproportionately Jewish (by 1940, 56 percent of new teachers in New York City were Jewish women). It was admirable work but difficult and often demoralizing, and he was abysmally paid. In 1953 Shanker joined the tiny socialist-led New York Teachers Guild and began to push for collective bargaining rights for teachers, an uphill battle even in union-friendly New York City, which did not recognize the bargaining rights of public employees until 1958. By 1962, taking advantage of New York's new collective-bargaining law—and organizing tirelessly among teachers—Shanker and his predecessor Charles Cogen had succeeded in winning a generous contract for New York schoolteachers. Over the course of the 1960s, Shanker took the message of teacher unionism nationwide. By the end of his career, teaching was the second most unionized profession in the United States (behind only the postal system)—in no small part because of the galvanic effect of Shanker's widely heralded victory in New York City.

Shanker's rise to power coincided with the dramatic racial transformation of urban schools. Since his days as a student, Shanker had supported the civil rights movement. He had been a member of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and later collaborated with A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin and Martin Luther King Jr., who saw a labor–civil rights alliance as essential to the goals of racial equality. But the battles over

My Graham Foust

Gone's the imposter. And gone's
his gawky cross. Gone's
his tweaked legacy's hit list—Hooray!—
and gone's his waste of song.

Gone's his civilized wrist. Gone's
his long-exploded gut. Gone's his cruel joy,
his humbling drunk, his good tired.
Gone's his one and every clod of common sense.

Gone's the water from under his mumble.
Gone's his mumble from up in the room.
Yet to go are his books and his bloodless clothes
and shoes. Gone's his broken oven and its beef.

Gone's his wet secret. Gone's
his pillar and what it let fall.
Gone's his excellent source of nothing,
his kick-ass pettiness, his premium harm.

Gone's the bite of you he spit. Gone's
his vague sense of what's to be done.
Gone's the dream that likely scraped at him
for more and more and more and gone's his walk.

Gone's his crass commiseration. Gone's
his shack of gauze and ice. Gone's
his tiny fountain. And gone
is his gluttoned-up light.

Gone's his want-to-need basis.
Gone's his happy plastic stain.
Gone's his glass wolf, his lazy sperm, his pack of exactness.
Gone's his played-through lack of played-through games of pain.

Gone's his fleshy shovel. Gone's
his ticket, gone's his train.
Gone's the friend who stepped away
and almost saved him. Gone's the blame.

Gone's his sister. Gone's his doctor.
Gone's his transom. Gone's his view.
He's nobody's autobiography.
Whose are you.

GRAHAM FOUST

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race and education unleashed a political whirlwind that eventually proved to be Shanker's undoing. In a story that gets short shrift in Kahlenberg's book, civil rights activists targeted Northern schools every bit as intensely as they did their Jim Crow counterparts in the South. Shanker supported the principle of integrated schooling, but his position was unpopular. New York whites fled the public schools in record numbers; black parents led school boycotts and massive demonstrations, and educational politics became a flashpoint of racial conflict. As districts like New York grew blacker, more Hispanic and poorer, the city's tax base dwindled. Minority parents grew increasingly disillusioned, both with the unmet promises of racial equality and the reality of overcrowding and inferior education in their schools. By the mid-1960s, influenced by black power, a vocal minority of black parents (joined by some white leftists and liberal foundations) began to support experiments in school decentralization and community control.

Shanker—along with many leftists and civil rights activists, both black and white—was skeptical of community control. That skepticism was well founded: the notion that a shift in school governance would magically transform classrooms was dubious. And as Michael Harrington and other leftist critics of decentralization pointed out at the time, white racists had long used local control as a way of keeping schools segregated. The issue came to a head in Ocean Hill-Brownsville in 1968, where a community-control experiment put local schools in the hands of black militants who, in an act that outraged unionists, violated union rules and fired a group of mostly Jewish white teachers en masse. Shanker defiantly led three lengthy strikes, paralyzing New York's public schools. He insisted that the strike was a defense of hard-won work rules—which it was.

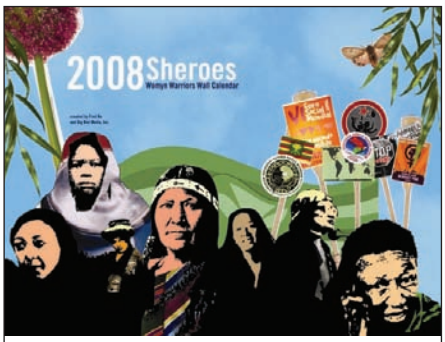
But the Ocean Hill-Brownsville conflict was much more. It became a shouting match between black radicals (who accused the white teachers of racism and occasionally resorted to anti-Semitic sloganeering) and white teachers and their supporters (who were more often than not condescending, if not usually the racists that their critics charged). The results were explosive. And Shanker, whom Kahlenberg tries mightily to defend, poured gasoline onto the fire of racial conflict by reprinting and widely distributing an anti-Semitic brochure that appeared during the crisis.

The community-control experiment continued after 1968, but in a weakened form. The teachers union successfully defended its members from politically motivated firings. But Ocean Hill-Brownsville was poisonous to race relations in New York and nationwide. Kahlenberg describes the aftermath in Manichean terms: it was, he argues, the beginning of a struggle between "two forms of liberalism—one pro-labor, pro-integration, and color blind, the other anti-labor, pro-community control, and race conscious." That's not quite right. Many labor activists supported integration—but also the use of race-sensitive programs like affirmative action. Many advocates of colorblindness were blind to the ways that race profoundly shaped the life chances of blacks and other minorities; and many members of the most vocal and effective unions, especially the skilled trades, fought to protect their white power and privilege against encroachments by women and minorities.

It was a '70s cliché that a conservative was a liberal who had been mugged by reality. To a great extent, Shanker—like many white liberal men of his generation—was mugged by the '60s. To overcome the trauma, he lashed out at dissenters of all varieties. While Ocean Hill-Brownsville was smoldering, Shanker denounced the antiwar movement as soft on communism. By the '70s he had joined the hyperbolic outcry against "limousine liberals" who supposedly allied with minorities against the white working class. In the process, he lost sight of those limousine-riding conservatives whose promarket and antiunion politics were far more damaging to the working class and public education. At the same time, he forged alliances with conservative Democrats like Washington Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson (who voted with Republicans on many foreign policy issues) and began seriously flirting with the right.

Shanker never veered as far rightward as did many of his allies, like Sidney Hook, Midge Decter, Elliot Abrams and Linda Chavez, all of whom sprinted into the ranks of the neocons. He was more of an egalitarian than they were—and remained a staunch and committed unionist while they cast their lot with corporate America and the antilabor Republican Party. But Shanker remained a socialist in name only. In 1983 he invited President Reagan to address the American Federation of Teachers, despite Reagan's staunch antiunionism. And in 1984 Shanker warmly welcomed culture warrior William Bennett, then head of the National Endowment for the Humanities, to headline the AFT annual convention. Shanker joined Bennett in his crusade for "traditional values" and against the scourge of "moral relativism." Not surprisingly, Reagan (engaging in his own unacknowledged act of affirmative action) tapped Chavez for his Cabinet. Over the course of the 1980s, Shanker also supported Reagan's massive defense buildup and praised the Nicaraguan *contras*, even if he distanced himself from such Reagan allies as South Africa's apartheid regime and Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet.

Shanker's march rightward was echoed in his shift in educational priorities. He railed against affirmative action (or what Kahlenberg shrilly and inaccurately brands as "quotas"). By the 1990s, Shanker's egalitarianism was so narrow that, like his neoliberal and neoconservative fellow travelers, his civil rights politics rested on the dubious distinction between equality of opportunity (which he supported) and equality of results (which he believed was a matter of individual initiative, merit and skill, ignoring the fact that so many people get jobs on the basis of their networks, not solely or even primarily their skills). He also staunchly opposed bilingual education, in large part because of his belief in inculcating students in a single national cultural tradition. And while he sensibly held out against curriculums that had as their primary goal enhancing the "self-esteem" of students (the best research shows that self-esteem and academic success are



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not correlated), he also led an increasingly influential band of school reformers who fetishized standardized testing as the solution to academic woes. Shanker became a vocal advocate of charter schools as well—succumbing to the folly that administrative reorganization would serve as a panacea for educational inequality. Kahlenberg points out that Shanker did not approve of the 1990s free-market variants on charter schools: he opposed the privatization of a public good. But by then, Shanker's longtime socialism was so thin that he could not see that proposals to bring competitiveness to public education would inevitably open the door to profit-seeking educational firms.

More than a half-century after Albert Shanker's public career began, our public education system is still riddled with inequalities. Our schools are reverting to a pre–*Brown v. Board of Education* racial order, separate and unequal, but only a remnant band of civil rights activists even cares. Mainstream Democrats—eager to win over long-lost Republicans—have spent most of the past fifteen years shoring up the market revolution and slouching rightward on matters of culture and values. And the Bush Administration's neoconservatives have embarked on a foreign policy to "democratize" the Middle East in ways that resonate with Shanker's own zealous foreign policy. Even though Shanker continued to cling to an increasingly unfashionable trade unionism, we live under a regime that his "tough liberalism" helped more than hindered. ■

FRANK DRIGGS COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES VIA NEWSCOM

John Coltrane, Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, Miles Davis and Bill Evans, 1958

Play It (Over and Over Again)

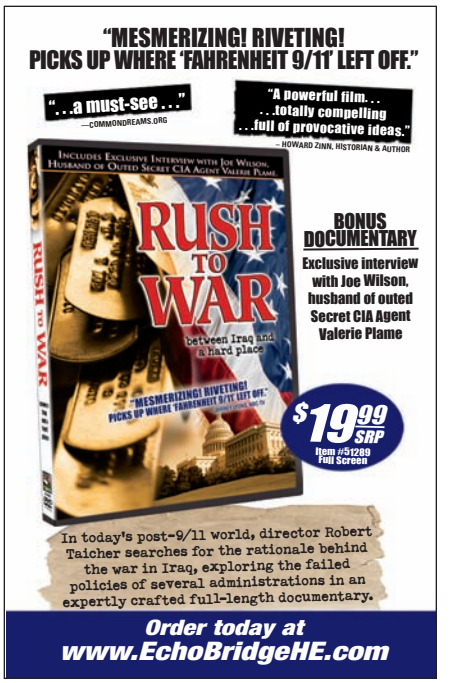
by TRAVIS A. JACKSON

Coltrane
The Story of a Sound.
by Ben Ratliff.
Farrar, Strauss & Giroux. 272 pp. $24.

"Holding someone is truly believing there's joy in repetition," sings Prince in one of the standout tracks on his 1990 album *Graffiti Bridge*. Typically for Prince, the song's lyrics and music sketch a scenario of seduction, one hinging on the incantatory power of repetition. Unusually, though, the song's narrator is the one seduced, drawn in by the way a woman repeatedly sings the words "Love me." In my mind's ear I always mishear the first word of the song's seductive tagline as "loving" instead of "holding." At the same time, I unconsciously substitute "something" for "someone." In neither case do I lose the sense of the song. If anything, the mishearings make the conceit a little richer: loving something is truly believing there's joy in repetition.

There are few areas of music where repetition in its myriad forms assumes a greater significance—and holds greater promises of joy—than jazz. Despite the changes presented and challenges posed by many jazz recordings released in and after 1959 (Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue*, Dave Brubeck's *Time Out*, Charles Mingus's *Mingus Ah Um*, Ornette Coleman's *The Shape of Jazz to Come* and John Coltrane's *Giant Steps* were all released that year), the essential core of jazz coalesces around group interplay over successive sonic cycles from twelve or thirty-two bars in length. The repetition and moment-to-moment alteration of harmonic progressions and melodic fragments, even when they recur in tunes

Travis A. Jackson, an associate professor of music at the University of Chicago, is the author of the forthcoming book Blowin' the Blues Away: Performance and Meaning on the New York Jazz Scene.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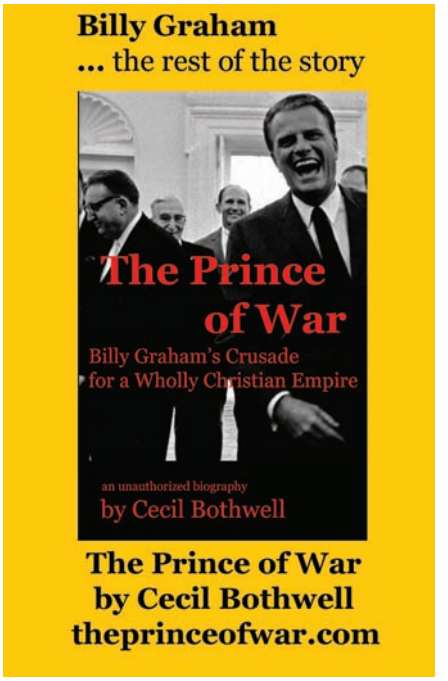

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with different names, provide a ground for further exploration. When alto saxophonist Julian "Cannonball" Adderley begins his fourth solo chorus on "Straight, No Chaser" (from the Davis album *Milestones*) with a blustery one-bar figure that Charlie Parker frequently used on blues-based tunes, we hear both possible results of repetition at work. Adderley doesn't merely reproduce Bird's tones and phrasing: he worries the line, twisting and transforming it almost as though he has caught himself falling back into old habits and is trying to break their hold.

The other saxophonist featured on that track, John Coltrane, had his own struggles with repetition. Indeed, one way of understanding Coltrane's music and life is to see them as meditations on how to embrace and escape repetition. The tenor player's lengthy practice routines, for example, are the stuff of legend. His previous biographers—including Bill Cole, Cuthbert Simpkins and J.C. Thomas—have detailed how Coltrane worked methodically through étude books like Sigurd Rascher's *Top-Tones for the Saxophone* (1941) and Nicolas Slonimsky's *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns* (1947). Noting that musicians, too, are fascinated by these stories, Lewis Porter writes in *Coltrane: His Life and Music* (1998) that they "are told with apparent love, respect, and admiration. But there is often a suggestion that Coltrane's practice was obsessive, that it was not a simple matter of working to improve, that there was an emotional desperation and drive in it that was somehow beyond the norm." When Coltrane kept returning to the woodshed, he seems to have been reaching for something harder to achieve than instrumental mastery. It's little wonder, then, that, like Porter, Coltrane's other biographers and fans describe him as an ascetic treading difficult musical pathways in search of some greater truth.

One result of Coltrane's study was the consolidation of his "three-tonic" approach to improvising and composing during the late 1950s. The approach was inspired partly by exercises in Slonimsky's book and partly by the time Coltrane spent studying classical composition with Dennis Sandole at the Granoff School of Music in Philadelphia. While working through tunes or soloing, Coltrane would imagine each chord as providing at least three equidistant (within the Western chromatic scale) points of departure. Marshaling his prodigious technique, he would often try to explore all three on a given sonority—leading critic Ira Gitler to describe his solos as cascading "sheets of sound." In his composing, Coltrane deployed the system (inspired by the major-third-separated harmonic weigh stations in the bridge of Rodgers and Hart's "Have You Met Miss Jones?") to break away from typical harmonic movement. In either case, he was trying to push himself, and perhaps his fellow musicians, toward greater heights of originality, to move them away from repetition. Arguably, though, Coltrane and his band mates needed to work through the changes repeatedly to keep them from sounding dry and academic. One need merely compare Tommy Flanagan's halting solo on "Giant Steps" with Coltrane's to hear why that is so.

Ben Ratliff, a jazz critic for the *New York Times* since 1996, makes similar observations in his new, not-quite-biography *Coltrane: The Story of a Sound*. In discussing "Giant Steps," Ratliff observes that by 1959, "Coltrane was theory mad." He continually studied recordings and books about music and philosophy and created challenges for himself and other musicians based on that study: "The 'Giant Steps' changes were the stiffest exercise he had as yet given himself as an athlete of improvising.... Why did Coltrane do this?... He felt...he wasn't good enough. But even after he had written a series of jazz's all-time great études, mastered them, made a watertight album out of them...he remained discontented." Ratliff suggests that Coltrane's philosophical readings may have been both a catalyst for repetition and the vehicle through which he mined something deeper. He suggests as well that Coltrane might have been influenced by Hazrat Inayat Khan's lectures, collected in a volume titled *The Mysticism of Sound and Music*. Summarizing the book, Ratliff says that Khan "wrote about repetition ('If you repeat: flower, flower, flower, your mind will be much more impressed than if you only think of the flower'). He wrote about how music leaves 'impressions' on plants and living things. (One of the chapters in the book is titled 'Impressions'—is it a coincidence that this became the title of a Coltrane song and album?)"

Coltrane is filled with many similar tantalizing suggestions, thanks in part to its differences from other Coltrane books. Ratliff condenses the biography proper into the first part of the book in order to devote himself in part two to a lengthy consideration of the saxophonist's influence since his death. Even more important, the book is less about music than it is about sound—as jazz musicians understand it: "every musician finally needs a sound, a full and sen-

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sible embodiment of his artistic personality, such that it can be heard, at best, in a single note." Ratliff's ideas about sound go further, encompassing the result of musicians' playing collectively and the word's sensual and cognitive dimensions: "how [sound] feels in the ear and…how it feels in the memory, as mass and as metaphor." All of Coltrane's practicing, all of his encounters with his idols and contemporaries, all of the changes in musical direction were, Ratliff might say, part of a search for an elusive sound.

John William Coltrane was born in Hamlet, North Carolina, in 1926 and moved to Philadelphia a few months shy of his seventeenth birthday. After a brief stint in the Navy, he returned to Philadelphia and gradually started gaining the notice of other musicians. He played with Dizzy Gillespie's big band between 1949 and 1951 and worked in bands led by Earl Bostic, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson and Johnny Hodges between 1952 and 1954. He truly started to come into his own, the standard narratives say, when he was a member of the Miles Davis Quintet (1955–57) and during a lengthy 1957 residency at the Five Spot as a member of Thelonious Monk's quartet. He made his own recordings during those years for Prestige and Blue Note—*Blue Train* (1957) was perhaps the best of his early efforts as a bandleader. The recordings that he made for Atlantic, especially *Giant Steps* and *My Favorite Things* (1961), helped to cement his growing reputation. Indeed, when ABC-Paramount launched Impulse! in 1960 with Creed Taylor as its head, Coltrane was the first artist it signed, and he remains to this day its marquee act. The albums he recorded for the label—*Africa/Brass* (1961), *Live at the Village Vanguard* (1961), *A Love Supreme* (1964), *Transition* (recorded in 1965, released posthumously), *Meditations* (1965) and *Live at the Village Vanguard Again!* (1966) among them—are the best examples of why Coltrane looms large in jazz history. For musicians, his marathon solos, especially on the live recordings, are primers on how to get the most from limited harmonic material. For musicians and fans they are magical, inspiring wonder at the kind of person who could play with such passion, such creativity and such force.

The members of his "classic quartet"—pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and especially drummer Elvin Jones—were perfect fellow travelers for Coltrane between 1961 and 1965. Together the four produced sublimely beautiful ballads and churning explorations of static harmony, off-kilter rhythms and unbridled intensity. Where Coltrane's work in the 1950s had been about exploring the intricacies of harmony, his work here was about exploring and extending the very nature of group interaction. A taped 1965 broadcast from the Half Note, released as *One Down, One Up* (2005), makes audible why the live quartet was an almost elemental force. On the twenty-eight-minute title track, Coltrane's solo is passionate and blistering, Tyner's accompaniment is searching and insistent and Garrison's playing alternately confirms and troubles the groove. When the latter two drop out, Jones's drumming comes to the fore. His thirteen-minute duet with Coltrane is a paragon of inventiveness—and endurance.

In early 1965, Coltrane again changed direction, this time going where even his longtime band mates and dedicated fans were reluctant to follow. His music seemed to be approaching the condition of noise,

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and his eagerness to embrace young, untested musicians onstage and in the studio felt like an affront to the members of his quartet. The addition of drummer Rashied Ali, saxophonist Pharoah Sanders and pianist Alice Coltrane, his wife, to the group prompted Jones and Tyner to leave Coltrane. His "late" recordings, from 1965 until his death in 1967, have inspired adulation and, more often, puzzlement.

Ratliff's book is intelligent and compelling. The text and its sources reveal how seriously he took his task. In addition to working with biographies and interviews, some of which must have been difficult to locate, Ratliff also draws on obscure radio programs, various unpublished materials, thirty-nine interviews he conducted with musicians and countless conversations with people knowledgeable about jazz, American culture and New York City. Throughout he tackles topics that might seem the province of academics—such as the merits of Theodor Adorno's and Edward Said's ideas about "late style"—with considerable skill and clarity. His skepticism regarding advocates of late style, for instance, emerges from common sense, and he dismisses the conceit with a gentle touch of the romanticism that infuses it:

> Mainly, an artist's final work won't objectively sum up anything. It is, however, likely to be fuller of subjectivity than ever before. It's full of the life force: that's all, that's enough, that's what it needs to be. If it's truly good and powerful, it deserves to engender a thousand misunderstandings.

Clearly, Ratliff is not afraid to call things as they are. At various points he hurls barbs at those less keenly attuned to history and musical complexity. He subtly takes a *Down Beat* reviewer to task for calling Coltrane's music angry, observing that "to anyone who might have been taken aback by a black man talking at length and with force, then, yes, such music could have been the equivalent of angry speech." And in a cranky but welcome gesture, he gives those neobohemians who willfully seem to misunderstand Coltrane's music their comeuppance when he says parenthetically, "Believe this: there is a type of free-jazz record collector—in fact, after punk, part of an increasingly flourishing breed—who does not necessarily think of Africa when he hears a Coltrane album like *Expression* [1967]. Having come through punk, Japanese noise, and electro-acoustic improvisation, he may just like it because it sounds extreme and nonnegotiable." Coltrane's music deserves both a less hagiographic and a more reflective and nuanced treatment, and that's what Ratliff offers.

While Ratliff avers in his introduction that he is a writer rather than a musician, his discussions of the sound of Coltrane and Coltrane's compatriots in performance are informative and compelling, especially when his own writing captures the spirit and feel of a recording in ways that a transcription never could. Describing a version of "Nutty" from *Thelonious Monk With John Coltrane at Carnegie Hall* (a 1957 recording unearthed and released in 2005), he writes:

> Coltrane has become agile, finding a flexible way of running his original patterns—patterns based on whole tones, on dominant sevenths, on diminished scales. Monk balances an inscrutable serenity against driving, almost violent rhythmic figures. And everything coming from Shadow Wilson, the drummer, is to be savored: he guards and upholds the groove, while building small, richly detailed accents around it.

Most important, Ratliff focuses his observational eye again and again on the power and perils of repetition, both for Coltrane and the jazz musicians who have emerged since his death. Like Miles Davis, who once told an interviewer that he stopped playing ballads because he liked them so much, Coltrane was attracted and repelled by the familiar, sometimes finding in it something fresh, sometimes not. His relentless search for a sound is what inspires musicians, fans and critics to keep returning to his music forty years after his death. (That same search is surely the reason Coltrane's home in Dix Hills, New York, was recently added to the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places, why the TraneStop Resource Institute of Philadelphia recently held its second John Coltrane Jazz Festival and why, more controversially, the St. John Coltrane Church continues to operate in San Francisco.) Indeed, Ratliff's reconsideration of a musician who has already been the subject of countless books, poems and documentaries is perhaps a subtle reminder of how much joy there is in repetition. Like the best writing on music, his book not only provides food for thought but also creates an insatiable desire to go back to the recordings, in hopes that we too might discover some elusive truth. ■

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The Nation, Classified Department, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003

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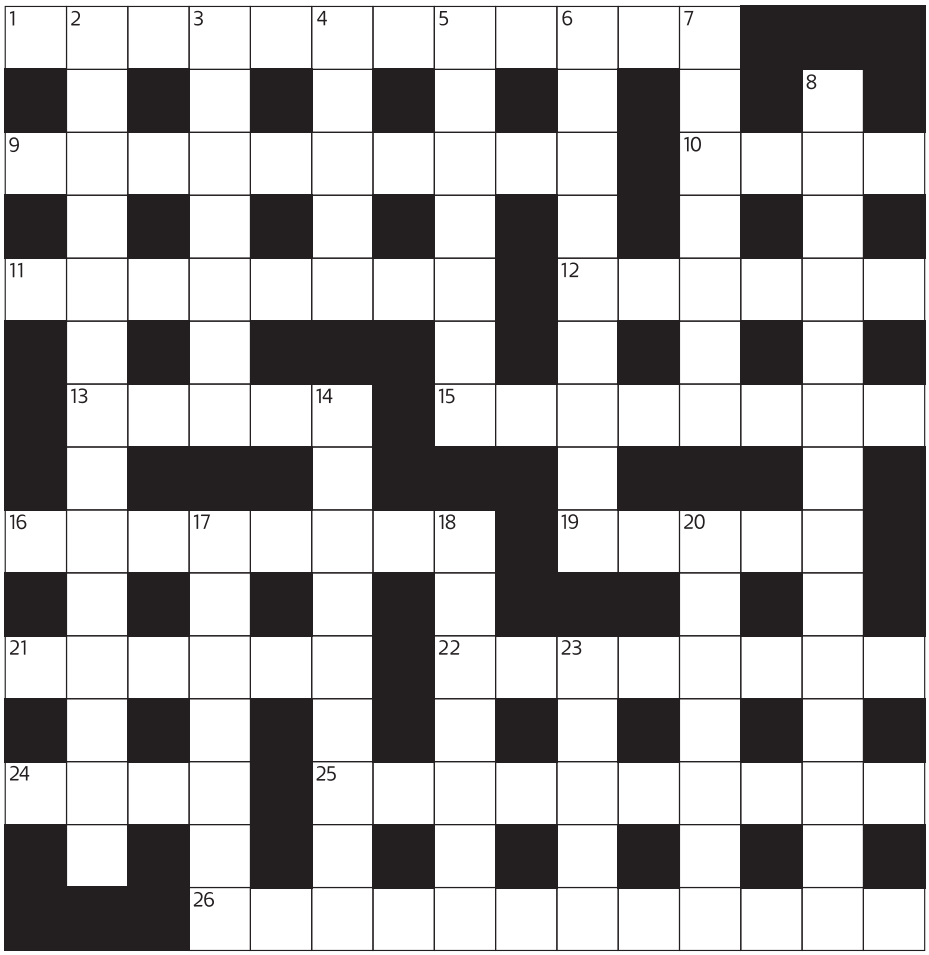
Puzzle No. 3102

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 A guy allowed back with dessert that is very dry, in return—but they're places where you hang stockings. (12)

9 Evidently you can go back to work—involving hitting the key twice. (10)

10 A broken nose for a long time! (4)

11 Taxes prove that even complete fools can have points. (8)

12 Had a bit to eat and hurried up inside. (6)

13 Jump out of bed and dress. (3-2)

15 Old musical instruments that might have a nasty way of scaring you. (8)

16 A form of Ute pick-me-up—the Germanic type. (8)

19 Grown poorly, which is not right! (5)

21 Last up, awkwardly, but you'll find yourself with one of the Minnesota Twins! (2,4)

22 Bugs get quiet inside it, as one closely observes. (8)

24 Very fancy to a Londoner, but shop-worn. (4)

25 It lets the air in, being an overt Latin form. (10)

26 What the showman likes to see people doing, but possibly a lot of hams are in it. (12)

DOWN

2 The repetition of verbal messages might be a hint as to the car you're considering. (14)

3 Held by Poseidon, but not when it's up in the air. (7)

4 Somewhat like onions, but letting out a bit of juice, one hears. (5)

5 Puts a bit of money in men's clothing? (7)

6 The ship's hands from Ireland might open a bottle. (9)

7 Rather expensive to the French, but a chase with this is quite a race. (7)

8 What the police might carry out has 5 down, when I got in a bit of trouble inside. (14)

14 Relating to a political union of certain people, sort of plans a victorious beginning. (9)

17 Where the Londoner might get a cuppa, having the wrong seat at the dance. (7)

18 A drink in China it seems, with some trouble. (7)

20 Leaves in the pot, possibly, and in Oregon a problem? (7)

23 Somewhat dated music that's making a comeback found in the playground. (5)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3101

A	R	K	A	N	S	A	S	■	A	N	I	M	A	L
L	■	E	■	I	■	L	■	F	■	O	■	A	■	A
F	L	E	E	T	■	L	O	L	L	I	P	O	P	S
R	■	L	■	P	■	E	■	E	■	S	■	R	■	A
E	C	H	O	I	N	G	■	E	D	I	T	I	N	G
D	■	A	■	C	■	E	■	C	■	E	■	■	■	N
■	S	U	C	K	E	D	■	E	U	R	A	S	I	A
C	■	L	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	I	■	S
R	E	S	T	F	U	L	■	A	W	A	R	D	S	■
A	■	■	■	R	■	E	■	V	■	R	■	E	■	B
C	O	M	P	A	R	E	■	E	P	I	S	T	L	E
K	■	O	■	G	■	W	■	R	■	Z	■	R	■	H
E	N	C	H	I	L	A	D	A	■	O	S	A	G	E
R	■	K	■	L	■	Y	■	G	■	N	■	C	■	L
S	A	S	H	E	S	■	D	E	B	A	R	K	E	D

The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the second week in January, and biweekly the third week of July through the second week of September) by The Nation Company, L.P. © 2007 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, L.P., 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. (212) 209-5400. Washington Bureau: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149, or call 1-800-333-8536. Publications Mail Agreement No: 40041477. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Circulation Dept. or DPGM, 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, ON N9A 6J3. When ordering a subscription, please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions. Basic annual subscription price: $52 for 47 issues. Back issues $4 prepaid ($6 foreign) from: The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. The Nation is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper.

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"As a professional restorer of antique and classic watches for major museums, I recently reviewed the movement and individual parts of the Stauer Apollo watch. The assembly and the precision of the mechanical movement are excellent."

—George Thomas
Towson Watch Company

Lost auction bid creates find of the century!

Can a new master outdo the old maestros?

After failing in his bid to purchase a true collector's timepiece, our chief watch engineer decided to just build his own. This coveted watch ended up selling for over $658,000 at auction, but Roger, our Swiss trained engineer with over 30 years experience, knew that he could build the perfect "new" antique for a reasonable price. He sat down and designed a face and a complex automatic movement that would capture the original design and do it with more precision than the original.

Not many engineers are trained to build watches at Swiss factories or have access to our $31 million in Swiss built machinery. The six hand automatic movement needed to be built with extremely fine tolerances. So, our best craftsmen figured out the way to build a timepiece with the legacy and heritage of the old masters, but use today's technology to insure the highest quality.

This being no easy feat, it took Roger and his genius of a brother, Matthew, 30 months to create the grand date engineering blueprints and build the 27 jeweled complex automatic movement for the Stauer *Apollo*.

The exhibition back affords a view of the 27 jeweled movement and accurate inner works.

The Classic Automatic Movement. With a vintage self-winding movement, the watch runs without batteries—it just needs the normal movement of your body to stay wound. The magnificent blue feuille hands measure day, date, year and even display a sun/moon AM/PM indicator.

A Gift From the Gods. The antiqued golden satin face has raised gold plated numbers and markers and a second hand that can be hacked (start and stopped) like military watches from the 1930s and 1940s. The watch is just as handsome on the reverse side, where the exhibition back affords a view of the 27 jeweled movement, the rotor, the escapement and the balance wheel. *Apollo* is the god of truth and history and he is certainly smiling on this timepiece.

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Are you missing the luxury of warm, relaxing baths? Well, grab your towel!

By John Fleming

For many of us, nothing is more relaxing than a long, luxurious bath. Unfortunately, because of safety concerns, many people, particularly older people, have to forego this simple pleasure. Sure, you can spend big bucks to remodel your bathroom to provide a bathtub you can use, but who wants to do that? Now there's a better way, and it lets you use the bath that's in your home today.

Questions about the Archimedes Bath Lift?
Try our pre-recorded
Bath Lift Toll-Free Hotline
1-866-254-4716

If you or a loved one has given up bathing because of age, mobility or safety concerns, the Archimedes Bath Lift is the answer. It is so simple, you'll wonder why no one thought of it earlier. The battery-operated "chair" safely and steadily lowers you to the bottom of the tub, and when you're done bathing, it gently raises you back to the top of the tub assuring a comfortable and safe exit from the tub. The remote is fully waterproof, so your bath won't be a "shocking" experience.

This innovative chair recharges overnight (don't worry, if there's not enough power stored for a full lower/raise cycle, it will not operate), features an easy-to-use hand control, and is designed for comfort and support. It's lightweight (less than 25 pounds assembled), and easily portable. It features a wide seat and high backrest for maximum comfort and support.

Rediscover the simple pleasure of a warm, relaxing bath with our exclusive home trial. Try the Archimedes Bath Lift for up to 90 days, and if you are not completely satisfied, simply return it for a refund of the product purchase price. Call today.

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